ISSUE 388 | JUNE 2010

DRAGON

A Dungeons & Dragons® Roleplaying Game Supplement

DRAGON®
ISSUE NO. 388

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DRAGON®

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DRAGON June 2010

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Hail to the Chief

Wow, it's June already. And it's 2010! What happened to this year? Time is on my mind, lately. Change is afoot, and I always get maudlin and nostalgic when *that* happens. So before I get the sniffles, let's move this along.

The news is rather simple, and possibly important to only a few. But it's big news to me, and as this is the space I've set aside to ramble on about whatever strikes my fancy each month, please bear with me.

This is my last month working on *Dragon* and *Dungeon* magazines. As many of you have heard, we've reorganized here in RPG R&D. We're moving into a brave age of new media and new ways to play, and we've got a fresh, upstart team of rogues and renegades dedicated to bringing D&D fully into the 21st century. We're calling it the D&D New Business team, and I'm excited to say that I get to be part of it. My new title is Digital Games Manager, and part of my new gig involves working with the D&D Studio to help with the content for all the tools and other digital gizmos for *D&D Insider*. The other part involves ... well, all sorts of projects, none of which I'm really able to talk about. NDAs, and all that. What I can say is that it's exciting, and I can't wait to share more—to our D&D Insiders, of course.

I'm going to miss this, all of it. I'm going to miss writing last-minute, panicked editorials ("That's supposed to go live tomorrow!?")

I'll miss the endless blaze of new. The stream of content that never turns off. The emails with pitches and articles and ideas that just leap out and slap you in the face. The promise of fresh, new talent, something the gaming industry needs endlessly.

I'll miss the building of content calendars and schedules, equal parts science to art. And I'll miss collaborating with co-workers to come up with new ideas for D&D that both refresh and reinforce.

But most of all, I'll miss the people. I work with a tight team now. We've been together longer than any team I've worked with in my career save the first—the team that welcomed me to Wizards and D&D and *Dragon* and *Dungeon*. More on them in a minute.

Bart, Jon, Steve, you guys rock. It's no lie that working with you has been the greatest part of this job. And Mr. Perkins, what to say? I've worked with Chris since day one. Even during my time at Paizo, he was our Wizards point of contact. So I can say that I've worked with Chris for my entire career, and *for* him for almost half of it. He's the best DM alive, as those of you who listen to our Penny Arcade podcasts know. He's an inspirational mentor. He's a creative genius. And he's been a great boss. Lucky for me, he's still just one cube away, and we'll still be collaborating on all sorts of fun projects in the future.

Team Alpha: Dave Gross, Chris Perkins (again), Jesse Decker, Pierce Watters, Larry Smith. My first team on *Dragon* and *Dungeon* made each day a challenge and an adventure.

And to the rest: Matt Sernett, Erik Mona, James Jacobs, Kyle Hunter, Eric Haddock, Chris Sims, Stacy Magelson, Stacy Longstreet, Lisa Chido. What a crew! What talent! Thank you all!

I've now spent a total of nine years working on these magazines. I've held every editorial position they could come up with: Editorial Assistant (as Chris Carlson), Assistant Editor, Associate Editor, Editor (all as Chris Thomasson), and Editor-in-Chief. I've worked with the best people the industry has to offer, and despite my name changes, I'm proud to call nearly all of them friends still. I watched the odometer click over for *Dungeon* #100 and *Dragon* #300. I've see the magazines trade hands twice. I watched them go from print to digital. And my favorite: I've seen the arrival of amazing new talent, to these pages and the industry at large.

My first issue of *Dragon* was #254. But it was working on *Dungeon* #72, my first issue of that magazine, where I first thought, "This is what I get to do now? Read D&D and get paid for it?" Yes, the job is that cool.

And no, you can't have it. That honor now belongs to Steve Winter, but I'll let him introduce himself in the *Dungeon* editorial. I couldn't leave if I didn't know my babies weren't in the best of hands, but I have no fear on that front. Steve is the best of the best, and we readers are lucky to have him.

With that, I'm off. I'd like to say something pithy and wise now, but I'm fresh out of ink, and mom is calling me in for dinner.

In Duty Bound: Paladin Basics

By Jeff Morgenroth
Illustration by Slawomir Maniak

"We take up arms neither for glory nor reward, but because we must. For a deluge of villainy spreads across the darkening world, and everywhere free-folk succumb to the twin evils of fear and faithlessness. We alone have been blessed with the gallantry to embolden our people's hearts—and the strength to make the daylight come again.

– King Galladan the Just

Dauntless and courageous, the paladin stands tall among even the greatest of heroes. His divine passion and skill at arms creates an unflinching vanguard on any battlefield. Paladins boldly shelter their companions from the onslaught of the wicked, smiting foes to ruin with strength from on high. With the world growing darker each day, all races are taking up the hallowed mantle of paladinhood in defense of their homes and beliefs. Though their divine gifts and sworn duties differ, all paladins are crusaders and protectors—iconic heroes.

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Class Features

"Be steadfast in the shadow of fear, and count your enemies with naught but the edge of a sword."

–From Tenets of the Platinum Dragon

Paladins step boldly into the role of the party defender, using their high hit points, excellent defenses, and powerful class features to draw the enemy's ire on the front line. Some excel at concentrating their attacks on a single target, hammering the foe with mighty weapon blows. Other paladins focus on skills and healing abilities, emphasizing their secondary leader role. Heavy armor and a good melee weapon are essential for all paladins, as is the courage to throw yourself into the heart of battle.

Unique among defenders, paladins are able to devastate enemies with righteous fury while also keeping their allies in fighting shape. Read on to get an idea of how the paladin's class features make them a formidable force on the battlefield.

Divine Challenge

Divine challenge is the key to the paladin's defender role. This power lets you mark any enemy within 5 squares at will, even those you cannot see. Challenged enemies that don't attack you are seared with radiant energy.

Channel Divinity

All paladins begin with two Channel Divinity powers, giving you useful tools for turning the tide of battle.

Divine Mettle: This power grants an ally a saving throw with a bonus equal to your Charisma modifier. With a paladin's typically high Charisma, the odds of making that saving throw improve dramatically. Add to this the power's excellent range–10 squares in a close burst–and you have a potential life-saver. To make use of *divine mettle* (a minor action), you'll need to pay attention to what your allies are doing and what conditions are affecting them.

Feat: Mettle Proven (*Dragon* Magazine 378, page 65)

Divine Strength: On your next attack, you can add your Strength modifier as extra damage. This will help deliver a fatal blow in the heroic tier but is a tough choice later on because it doesn't scale with your level. You'll want to use *divine strength* only when the odds of hitting are good, such as when you have combat advantage or other bonuses to attack rolls, since it only applies to your next attack that turn and uses a minor action.

Smiting the Limits of Divine Challenge

Compared to the fighter or warden, paladins may seem to have a lackluster marking ability. Since *divine challenge* marks only one enemy at a time, it can be difficult to lock down multiple targets; moreover, *divine challenge* doesn't prevent the target from moving away from you, and it can't be used on your next turn if you don't attack or move adjacent to the target when you challenge it. You'll need to creatively overcome these issues to be a strong defender. Here are some tips on how to make the most of *divine challenge*.

Who to Challenge: You should challenge the most intimidating enemy on the field, because you have the defenses and hit points to go toe-to-toe with the most fearsome villains. Doing so will keep the enemy's attention on you, allowing your allies to focus their efforts where needed. Paladins are outstanding single-target defenders–leave the minions to the fighter.

When to Challenge: Use *divine challenge* as early and as often as you can, with some caveats. Doing so uses your minor action, so manage your turn carefully. Moreover, if you cannot end adjacent to or attack the target on the same turn that you challenge it, the mark ends and you can't use the power on your next turn, so use it only when you are certain to be within attack range. *Divine challenge* is a close burst, so it won't provoke opportunity attacks and you can avoid triggering powers which might push you back or slow you down after attacking.

Damage or Defense? Don't be disappointed if you rarely deal *divine challenge*'s radiant damage. The point is to keep enemies from attacking your allies. If your challenged target only attacks you, you're doing your job as a defender.

Feats: Mighty Challenge (*Divine Power*, page 135) is a good heroic-tier choice because it increases your challenge damage by your Strength modifier–likely a high ability. Contagious Challenge (*Divine Power*, page 138) is a winning paragon-tier feat. It allows you to subject an adjacent foe to your divine sanction (see below) with a hit against your challenged target. Any feat that enhances an aspect of *divine challenge* is worth considering, because you'll be using this feature almost every round of combat.

Roleplaying: Never underestimate the effect of a bold, commanding presence at the game table. For your next *divine challenge*, try dramatically calling out your foe's name while shaking a clenched fist and locking eyes with the DM. Your enthusiastic roleplaying will be fun for everyone, and your friends will mock the creature you challenged if it does anything other than charge you!

Other Options: Many feats can greatly expand your Channel Divinity repertoire, but keep in mind that you can use Channel Divinity only once per encounter. While stylish, overinvestment in these feats might make it tough to fulfill your role. Ask yourself whether the power the feat grants is as good as *divine mettle* or *divine strength*. If not, then hold off until you have feats to spare. Channel Divinity feats are best chosen when they augment something that you already do or address a weakness within the party.

Implements

By using holy symbols, paladins can focus divine energy to empower certain attacks. Not all characters will find implements a necessity. Charisma-based paladins will find that these implement-based powers can add versatility to their build. Ranged and burst powers let you attack your *divine challenge* target from a distance and may have other effects as well. Use these powers to set up favorable conditions for yourself and your allies. Protecting and virtuous paladin builds both make frequent use of implements, while ardent and avenging builds should focus on powers with the weapon keyword.

Optional Class Features

Paladins may select from one of the following three options at character creation. Each of the powers detailed below lends itself to a distinct style of play and will be further discussed under Builds.

Lay on Hands

Lay on hands is a useful—sometimes essential—tool for most paladins. For a minor action, you can spend one of your own healing surges to let an ally regain hit points. Paladins have more surges than most other classes, so this is hardly a downside; it's really a blessing in disguise, because it lets your more fragile companions keep their surges for post-fight recovery. While you shouldn't be counted on to be the party healer, *lay on hands* is useful in do-or-die situations or when the group lacks a dedicated leader.

Feat: Devoted Paladin (*Divine Power*, page 131)

Ardent Vow

Introduced in *Divine Power*, *ardent vow* is an amalgam of *divine challenge* and *divine strength*. *Ardent vow* is the foundation of the ardent paladin build, and it can only be gained by sacrificing your *lay on hands* feature.

You may use *ardent vow* a number of times per day equal to your Wisdom modifier. With each use, you deal extra damage on your next attack and mark your foe. The extra damage is slightly better than *divine strength* at 5 plus your Wisdom modifier. The real advantage is that you place your foe under divine sanction for a turn, an effect which acts just like *divine challenge*. This may seem redundant, but you can use this combination to mark multiple targets and punish them all if they ignore you. The divine sanction applied by *ardent vow* is renewed each time you hit the target before the end of the encounter.

Virtue's Touch

Also introduced in *Divine Power*, *virtue's touch* keeps your allies fighting no matter what debilitating effects enemies might throw at them. This alternative to *lay on hands* allows the paladin to remove one of a variety of conditions from an adjacent ally as a minor action. Since it works even on effects that don't allow a saving throw, like the stun from a dragon's *frightful presence*, *virtue's touch* can really save the party in high-pressure situations.

Builds

Though the major paladin builds have many shared traits and features, there is still room for variety and distinctiveness within the class, developed mostly through your choice of powers, feats, and play style. Think about how you want to fill your defender role and how much you want to cross over into the leader role. The following concepts might help you pick the best build for your character idea.

Defensive: Watchful and responsive, the protecting paladin heals or enhances allies while hindering multiple enemies. This build emphasizes ranged or burst attacks over melee.

Heroic: If you like the idea of being the knightly foundation of the party, delivering powerful attacks and healing when needed, consider the avenging paladin build.

Sacred: If you prefer versatility with an emphasis on passion and courage over physical strength, try the virtuous paladin build.

Smite! To deliver the fury of your god unto your enemies, deal hefty damage, and command respect on the battlefield, consider the ardent paladin.

Ardent Paladin

"*Let the righteous follow me on a road paved with the wicked dead.*"

–Arjuth Ko, dragonborn scourge of infidels

Driven by a crusader's convictions, ardent paladins smite their enemies with reckless zeal, bringing their god's wrath to their foes.

As an ardent paladin, you make frequent use of the *ardent vow* feature as well as divine sanction. You will be able to mark multiple foes and unleash powerful attacks. This might comes at the cost of the *lay on hands* feature, so your secondary role of leader is minimized. You become more like a striker, specializing in offense at the expense of defense. Yet your god demands vengeance, and you will see it done.

Abilities

You rely on Strength for all of your attacks, so make it your highest ability score. Wisdom comes next; it adds uses of *ardent vow* and improves the secondary effects of many powers. Constitution is only slightly less important, since you'll likely be surrounded and should favor a two-handed weapon over a shield.

Ardent Paladin Spread		
STR 17	DEX 8	WIS 15
CON 12	INT 10	CHA 11

Powers and Feats

Select powers that make the most of your divine sanction. The at-will power *ardent strike* will be one of your most useful attacks; when combined with *divine challenge*, it allows you to mark two foes every turn. *Ardent strike* can also be used as a charge attack, enabling you to boldly advance into the fray with great speed.

Choose feats which improve your offense and enhance your *divine challenge* and divine sanction. Also look for feats which take advantage of your high Wisdom.

Ardent Righteousness

Ardent paladins are most effective when surrounded by enemies. Because they can mark many targets at once, it makes sense for their allies to stick close by. This way, the effectiveness of their marks–and their potential radiant damage–is maximized.

Avenging Paladin

"*When noble words fail, bold deeds may yet foul the demon's wings.*"

– Autullis Morlinan,
human champion of Sommerguard

The avenging paladin is the iconic knight in shining armor, the classic defender, hero, and champion.

As an avenging paladin, your attacks emphasize physical strength and direct confrontation using high-damage powers. You balance powerful strikes with healing to protect the party, making you an invaluable front-line combatant. For truth, honor, and duty, you will lay waste to the wicked with your boundless ardor.

Abilities

Your primary attacks depend on your Strength, but Charisma is equally important because it increases your healing abilities and additional effects granted by many of your powers. Your place is in front fighting the nastiest opponents, so Constitution will also be important.

Avenging Paladin Spread		
STR 16	DEX 8	WIS 11
CON 13	INT 10	CHA 16

Powers and Feats

The versatility of the avenging paladin makes power selection largely a matter of taste, but a good mix of offensive and defensive weapon attacks is best. *Holy strike* is a smart option, because it lets you do radiant damage at will.

Choose a mix of offensive and defensive feats to complement your place in the party's vanguard.

Protecting Paladin

"*To me, brave hearts, to me! Hope shall not fail while faith holds true!*"

–Dain Brightstone, Shield of the Dwarven Kings

The protecting paladin trades high damage potential for stickiness, emphasizing defense with party-bolstering powers and enemy-debilitating effects that give your allies an advantage in battle.

As a protecting paladin, you take up a holy symbol as often as a melee weapon and use it to invoke the might of your deity. You become a boon to the faithful and a scourge to evil.

Abilities

Protecting paladins emphasize Charisma to make their implement-based powers more effective. Strength should be your second-highest ability, since you will be called on to fight up close. Wisdom should be a third priority; it heightens the effects of many of your powers.

Protecting Paladin Spread		
STR 15	DEX 8	WIS 12
CON 11	INT 10	CHA 17

Powers and Feats

Select implement-based powers whenever they bring additional effects that will help the party, but don't neglect Strength-based attacks. *Enfeebling strike* is a good at-will choice, since it bestows a penalty to attack rolls on the target. Remember that close attacks don't provoke opportunity attacks, so many of your implement-based powers can be used in the thick of battle.

Look for feats which take advantage of your high Charisma and enhance your protective class features. Channel Divinity feats can grant you unique defensive powers as well.

Virtue and Protection

The protecting and virtuous paladin builds play differently from the stereotypical paladin by emphasizing your secondary leader role. Even though Strength is secondary for you, your defenses will be quite high, so the party will need you on the front line. Try to position yourself near as many allies and enemies as possible. This way, you can heal allies easily and target many foes with your burst powers. Many of your powers set up advantages that require good teamwork to use, so think tactically when using them. Your job is to provide a tough target for enemies while making it easier for allies to deal heavy damage.

Virtuous Paladin

"Darkness passes, and so too does the hurt its foulness inflicts on the pure of spirit."

– Priya, deva paladin and daughter of a thousand saints

The virtuous paladin is more blessed by the gods than his peers and thus is able to banish corruption with a touch.

As such an exemplar, you will help the party with implement-based powers and *virtue's touch*. Your purity and dedication will be a beacon to allies in dark times, giving them the strength and courage to withstand any evil.

Abilities

Focus on Charisma and Wisdom. Charisma will help most of your attacks, while Wisdom will enhance your secondary effects and add uses of *virtue's touch*. Strength comes third; like the protecting paladin, you will still find yourself a front-line defender.

Virtuous Paladin Spread		
STR 12	DEX 8	WIS 16
CON 11	INT 11	CHA 16

Powers and Feats

As a virtuous paladin, you rely on your holy symbol. Choose implement powers that complement your style and party composition. Your goal should be to keep the group in fighting shape, so powers which grant healing or saving throws are important. *Virtuous strike* is an excellent at-will choice that deals radiant damage and gives you a bonus to your saving throws—and it's a basic melee attack, so it can be used as an opportunity attack.

Concentrate on feats which take advantage of your high Charisma and Wisdom, many of which enhance your class features. Channel Divinity feats also fit well with the virtuous paladin's theme.

A Paladin's Raiment

Plate armor—accept no substitutes. With plate, your AC will be high, and with a shield you'll be almost untouchable. Shields can also help compensate for a low Reflex defense. Protecting paladins should favor shields, while ardent paladins should go for a big two-handed weapon. If you can take the damage, drop the shield and swing a large weapon. The accuracy of swords makes them an attractive choice, but other weapon types might fit better with your deity or style of play. Consider investing in a mount as well; it will help make up for your limited mobility from heavy armor.

Race

If you have a specific paladin build in mind, it makes sense for you to choose a race based on the mechanical benefits that choice will give to your attacks and features. If you're more interested in style, remember that paladins represent champions of all races; they are the essence of their people. Make your choice with the background and flavor of a race in mind. Even if racial traits don't strengthen your build's core features, they may be a unique way to accomplish things differently from the typical paladin. The following table gives you an idea of which races favor which paladin builds.

Race	Build
Changeling	Protecting
Deva	Virtuous
Dragonborn	Avenging
Drow	Protecting
Dwarf	Ardent
Eladrin	Avenging
Elf	Ardent
Genasi	Avenging
Githzerai	Ardent
Gnoll	Ardent
Gnome	Protecting
Goliath	Avenging
Half-Elf	Protecting
Half-Orc	Avenging
Halfling	Protecting
Human	Any
Kalashtar	Virtuous
Longtooth Shifter	Avenging
Minotaur	Avenging
Razorclaw Shifter	Virtuous
Revenant	Ardent
Shadar-Kai	Virtuous
Tiefling	Protecting
Warforged	Ardent
Wilden	Virtuous

Paladins by Deity

If you are designing your paladin around a particular deity, you may want to select a build which fits the god thematically. These choices are stylistically close to the gods of the D&D pantheon.

DEITY	THEMATIC BUILD
Avandra	Protecting
Bahamut	Avenging
Corellon	Avenging
Erathis	Protecting
Ioun	Virtuous
Kord	Ardent
Melora	Protecting
Pelor	Avenging
The Raven Queen	Ardent
Sehanine	Virtuous

Domains

Introduced in *Divine Power*, domains offer a way for you to enhance your at-will powers, skills, and Channel Divinity class feature. Domains are also a creative way for you to incorporate your choice of deity into your build. The following table will help you choose a domain which best suits your choice of at-will powers.

AT-WILL POWER	ASSOCIATED DOMAINS
Ardent Strike	Darkness, destruction, strife, torment
Bolstering Strike	Change, creation, earth, life, war
Enfeebling Strike	Death, madness, moon, poison, trickery, tyranny, undeath, winter
Holy Strike	Fate, freedom, luck, strength, vengeance
Valiant Strike	Arcana, civilization, hope, protection, skill, storm, wilderness
Virtuous Strike	Justice, knowledge, love, sea, sun

Developing Your Paladin

Paladins have sometimes been viewed as one-dimensional do-gooders, especially given alignment restrictions in earlier editions of D&D. 4th Edition's alignment system adds flexibility and opens up tremendous roleplaying opportunities for you to explore. Consider ways you can give your paladin a fully fleshed out personality complete with virtues, fears, and flaws appropriate to one who dedicates his life to divine service. Think about the ways in which your paladin embodies her deity's dogma while being more than a simple embodiment of it. Here's an example based on Bahamut's precepts.

"Uphold the highest ideals of honor and justice." Does the pressure of living up to these expectations take its toll on you? Do you sometimes wish you could take the easier course, perhaps giving in to mortal vice or ignoring difficult choices when they come? Where do these high ideals come from? Do you follow them from personal choice or to earn the respect of an overbearing parent figure? Are you critical of yourself when you slip on the high road of honor and justice?

"Be constantly vigilant against evil and oppose it on all fronts." Do you wish sometimes to simply rest and let the world's troubles bother someone else? Do you resent always being the first called to face terrible dangers? How do you feel about those who disrespect your efforts or take them for granted? Do you sometimes wish evil upon wicked people and allow it to occur if you know that they deserve it?

"Protect the weak, liberate the oppressed, and defend just order." You are strong, but were you always? Perhaps you were once one of the weak or the oppressed, and you became the hero you are now out of determination to never feel that way again. Why should you help people who aren't willing to help themselves? Do you feel that wicked populations deserve the tyrants who often rule over them? Can you in good conscience overthrow a regime if its harsh laws benefit the majority at the expense of a few?

The Unaligned Paladin

If the idea of playing a zealous crusader doesn't appeal to you, choose to be an unaligned character. Unaligned paladins have a very different style from their more iconic counterparts. They are rarely driven by orthodox convictions. You may have become a paladin for more practical reasons. Perhaps you feel that your status within the faith gives you societal advantages, or maybe your background has forced you into the role of paladin, something which never appealed to you in your youth. The complexities of mortal emotions can make this sort of conflicted character a realistic and fun challenge to play and give you the chance to create a carefree or jaded member of this traditionally high and mighty class.

Unaligned paladins still must follow unaligned deities. For example, an unaligned paladin might choose to follow Erathis (Unaligned) with the aim of succeeding in politics. A paladin who values prowess in battle above other things might do well to worship Kord, while another follows the precepts of Ioun in her effort to spread knowledge and learning to the grim places of the world.

Heroic Tier Feats

Any feat in this section is available to characters of any level who meet the prerequisites.

Commanding Vow

Prerequisite: Paladin

Benefit: Whenever you subject an enemy adjacent to you to your divine sanction, you can slide that enemy 1 square as a free action.

Divinity's Shield

Prerequisite: Paladin, Channel Divinity class feature

Benefit: When you use a channel divinity power, you gain a +2 bonus to Fortitude, Reflex, and Will defenses until the end of your next turn.

Implacable Mettle

Prerequisite: Paladin, *divine mettle*

Benefit: If the target of *divine mettle* fails the granted saving throw, you gain an additional use of Channel Divinity this encounter, and the target gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the end of its next turn.

In Shining Armor

Prerequisite: Paladin

Benefit: If you are wearing plate armor and using a shield, adjacent allies gain a +1 shield bonus to AC if you are conscious.

Knightly Bearing

Prerequisite: Paladin

Benefit: You gain a +2 feat bonus to Diplomacy and Intimidate.

Lend Health

Prerequisite: Paladin, *lay on hands*

Benefit: Whenever you use a power that allows an ally to spend a healing surge or regain hit points as if he or she had spent a healing surge, that ally can use your healing surge value to determine the number of hit points regained.

Mercy's Reward

Prerequisite: Paladin, Channel Divinity class feature

Benefit: When you score a critical hit, you can choose to reduce it to a normal hit instead. If you do, you or one ally adjacent to you can spend a healing surge and regain 10 additional hit points.

Selfless Protector

Prerequisite: Paladin

Benefit: When an ally adjacent to you becomes bloodied or drops to 0 or fewer hit points, you can slide the ally 1 square and shift 1 square into the ally's vacated square as a free action.

Sudden Smite

Prerequisite: Paladin, *divine strength*

Benefit: When you hit with an attack, you can use *divine strength* as a free action and apply its damage bonus to the triggering hit instead of your next attack.

Paragon Tier Feats

Feats in this section may be chosen by characters of 11th level or higher who meet the prerequisites.

Angelic Protection

Prerequisite: 11th level, paladin, *lay on hands*

Benefit: When you use *lay on hands*, you can instead grant the target temporary hit points equal to the number of hit points it would have regained.

Fulfilled Vow

Prerequisite: 11th level, paladin, *ardent vow*

Benefit: The first time in an encounter that you reduce an enemy marked by you to 0 or fewer hit points, you gain a +5 bonus to your next damage roll before the end of your next turn.

Hero's Poise

Prerequisite: 11th level, paladin

Benefit: When you succeed on a saving throw to end an effect, each ally that can see you within 5 squares of you gains a bonus to saving throws equal to your Charisma modifier until the start of your next turn.

Holy Steed

Prerequisite: 11th level, paladin, mounted combat feat

Benefit: While you are mounted, your mount gains a +2 bonus to all defenses and a bonus to damage rolls equal to your Charisma modifier.

Just Punishment

Prerequisite: 11th level, paladin

Benefit: When an enemy reduces an ally you can see to 0 or fewer hit points, you gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls against that enemy until that ally has 1 or more hit points or until the end of the encounter.

Virtue's Chosen

Prerequisite: 11th level, paladin, *virtue's touch*

Benefit: Your *virtue's touch* can also remove ongoing damage.

Wrathful Conviction

Prerequisite: 11th level, paladin, *divine strength*

Benefit: The extra damage dealt by *divine strength* is equal to your Strength modifier plus your Charisma or Wisdom modifier.

Epic Tier Feats

These feats may be taken only by characters of 21st level or higher who meet the prerequisites.

Champion's Countenance

Prerequisite: 21st level, paladin

Benefit: While you are at maximum hit points, allies that can see you gain a +2 bonus to their Fortitude, Reflex, and Will defenses.

Promise of Judgment

Prerequisite: 21st level, paladin

Benefit: When you miss with a paladin attack, the target is subject to your divine sanction until the end of your next turn.

About the Author

Lurking in the outskirts of Seattle, **Jeff Morgenroth** has mastered fires of endless academia and the soulless drudgery of the skittering rat-race, at last making his pact with the baleful entities at Wizards of the Coast. He edited a portion of *Monster Manual™ 2*, and it is prophesied that his name will defile the pages of more books soon.

Old Souls: Heroes of Legend Reborn

By Rodney Thompson
Illustration by William O'Connor

From time to time, mortal creatures transcend the boundaries between what is possible and what is unthinkable. Those who break through the barrier between what mortals can do and what should remain in the province of the gods become something more. They undergo a transformation that alters their place within reality. Their souls are changed, and they cease to be another soul passing through the world and into the Raven Queen's grasp. They glow brightly with the light of ambition and aspiration and are more than mortal souls; they are the life force of legends.

From time to time, these special souls, the souls of legends, are reborn in new bodies to lead new lives. Yet this rebirth is no haphazard occurrence; the souls of legends are born again when they are needed for a task that can be completed only by a mortal capable of surpassing the limitations of its own existence. The souls of legends have already done this once, and in their rebirth they are intended to do it again.

Some believe that the Raven Queen decides which of these powerful souls should be returned to the world as a part of a grand plan. They theorize that she allows these legendary souls to be reincarnated to alter the flow of fate, like placing chess pieces in a grand game that spans eons. Others believe that when mortals transcend the boundaries placed upon them at their creation by the gods, they capture a fragment of divinity within them that allows them to operate outside the normal cycle of life, death, and afterlife in the domains of the gods. Still others believe that the transition from mere mortal to living legend dislodges the soul from its place within the planar structure, allowing them to be reborn at the whim of some great force beyond the knowledge of sages and gods.

The following three epic destinies build upon the idea that great heroes and powerful beings can be reborn, again and again, as their souls reincarnate when the time is right. If you take on any of these epic destinies, imagine that your character has embraced this reincarnation as a fundamental aspect of who the character is, as well as the role he or she plays in the course of history.

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Draconic Incarnation

You bear within you the spirit of a powerful, ancient dragon, reborn in mortal form.

Prerequisite: Any arcane class

Long ago, far back in the mists of time, ancient dragons mastered the power of arcane magic and used it to shape the world around them. In those dark first days, the world was a primeval place, and these dragons held dominion over everything they beheld. The races thought of as ancient today, such as dwarves and elves, were but children when these spellcasting dragons were at the height of their power. The fabric of reality was reshaped by these dragons, who used their arcane prowess to warp the world around them.

Those days of limitless power could not last, and soon the mighty dragon sorcerers fell. Being jealous guardians of their arcane lore, few passed on what they had learned to the other dragons. Over time, as these dragons fell into obscurity and legend, the knowledge of their spells and magic likewise vanished from the world. Now, millennia later, archmages and sages occasionally unearth fragments of lore pertaining to these great wyrms and perhaps master a spell or two from the dragons' repertoire. Even the most powerful wizard, however, would be but a stage magician compared to the ancient spellcasting dragons.

Now the winds of fate circle around once more, and the spirits of those long-dead dragons find themselves spun back into the world, this time in the bodies of smaller, mortal creatures. Although others might feel the call of arcane magic from the depths of their soul, you hear the whispers of the ancient dragon spirit within you. It coaxes you, guides you, and teaches you. Yours is not a quiet soul but a raging inferno of arcane knowledge waiting to be released. Your dragon soul awakens and remembers what it was like to be a master of all it saw.

Immortality

Your own soul is that of an ancient dragon—one seeking to reclaim its former power and willing to use you as a vessel.

Draconic Manifestation: You have listened to the words whispered into your mind by the soul of an ancient dragon within you. The secrets of the universe begin to unfold before you, and now you are ready, in mind and body, for the transformation that lies ahead of you. All that remains is the completion of your Destiny Quest, the final achievement in your life as a mortal that signals the time when the dragon within you can awaken. Once your quest is complete, the dragon soul flares inside you, and you and the spirit of the ancient dragon become one being, far more than the sum of your two parts. You might yet look like one of the mortal races, but clinging to you as tightly as your shadow is the powerful spirit of the ancient dragon.

Draconic Incarnation Features

Ancient Resurgence (21st level): You increase your Intelligence score or your Charisma score by 2, and increase any other ability score by 2.

You also become able to speak, read, and write Draconic fluently.

Spirit of the Dragon (24th level): When you are in danger, the dragon soul within you flares up and emerges, warding off those who would see you dead before the spirit can fully emerge.

Once per day when you die, the spirit of the ancient dragon within you surges forth to defend your body long enough to resurrect you from the dead. This draconic spirit is under your control and has all of the same statistics and abilities as you, except as follows: the draconic spirit is size Large, has your maximum hit points, and is both insubstantial and has phasing. The draconic spirit shares your powers and abilities (it does not have a pool of powers of its own), and it can use your magic items as though it was wielding them, including weapons and implements.

More on Reincarnation

Other aspects of the Dungeons & Dragons® game deal with reincarnation of powerful spirits, and you might want to consider them when choosing to take on the role of a reincarnated hero. The deva race (*Player's Handbook 2*) and their rakshasa nemeses are constantly reincarnated, and with full knowledge of their past lives. This Winning Races: Deva article features two epic destinies dealing with deva reincarnation.

Additionally, sometimes the primal spirits intervene in the cycle of life and death, and they ferry souls back to the world for reincarnation. The Reincarnate Champion epic destiny (from *Primal Power*) can provide more options for telling the story of reincarnation. Multiple ways for characters to be reincarnated can suggest that certain souls are used as recurring soldiers in a struggle between the gods, the primordials, and the primal spirits. Any reincarnated heroes might be caught at the center of such a conflict.

At the end of the encounter, if the draconic spirit has any hit points remaining, the spirit disperses and at the end of a short rest you return to life with 1 hit point. If your body is destroyed, the draconic spirit cannot resurrect you.

Draconic Form (26th level): As a part of your ever-growing understanding of the power within you, you have learned to draw forth the power of your draconic soul and take on a form more fitting to its majesty. You gain the *draconic form* power.

Draconic Form — Draconic Incarnation — Attack 26

Your body grows larger, with scales spreading across your body and dragon's wings emerging from your back. You have become the dragon whose soul resides within your body.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Fire, Force, Polymorph
Minor Action — **Personal**

Effect: You assume the form of an ancient dragon until the end of the encounter. While you are in this form, your size becomes Huge, your reach increases to 3 squares, and you gain a fly speed equal to your speed +2. Until the end of the encounter, you can use the following at-will power:
Standard Action — **Close** blast 5
Target: Enemies in blast
Attack: Your highest ability modifier +9 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d8 + your highest ability modifier fire and force damage.

Ancient Arcanist (30th level): As the full consciousness of the ancient dragon within you begins to emerge, you likewise come to master some of the powerful spells once wielded by the dragon whose soul you share. Your knowledge of these spells springs to mind unbidden, and you can wield them with the same skill as if you had mastered them through your own means.

Choose two 25th level (or lower) daily arcane powers from any classes. You gain those powers.

Thief of Legend

There is nothing you can't steal—nothing.

Prerequisite: Trained in Stealth, Thievery

Long ago, there lived a thief who was so skilled at the art of taking that nothing was outside his grasp. Some said that he could steal the throne out from underneath a king, make off with the princess's smile, and snatch the stars from the night sky—all over the course of a single evening! How much of the thief's myth was true and how much has become the tall tales of legend is a matter of debate, but few take such stories seriously. Such tales border on the ridiculous for most people, but you know the truth: The legends are real, and you are that Thief of Legend reborn.

The Thief of Legend could do all of the fantastic things that people today describe. This thief had fingers so light and nimble that some said he could steal the crown off the queen without her even noticing. His movements were so quiet that death could not track him. His plans were so cunning that he outwitted the gods at every turn. Artifacts guarded by thousands of angels vanished from Astral domains, and the only evidence that remained of the thief's passing were the faint echoes of laughter where treasures once were held.

Yet these feats have, on occasion, been reproduced by other mortals. The true point of transition between master thief and Thief of Legend came when this thief learned how to steal things that are intangible. So great was this legendary thief's skill that reality bent to his trickery. He discovered ways to steal laughter, or memories, or the color from a painting. Now, generations later, that thief has been reborn, and you are coming to realize that you are the reincarnation of this famous thief. Over time, you have begun to recall the tricks and techniques that you mastered in that former life, and you are growing once more into the master thief that the stories still describe.

Immortality

As you grow ever more enlightened about the thievery and trickery that you had mastered in your past life, reality once again begins to bend around you, allowing you to steal things that others say can never be taken.

The Greatest Prize: Despite the fact that your skills can be used for greed and self-service, you have been spun back into the world for some purpose. You have one great thing that you must steal—one bit of thievery for which you were given a new life and incarnation. This prize is the subject of your Destiny Quest; you might be destined to steal the magic away from an ancient dracolich or to place your hands on the only artifact that can slay the dark goddess Lolth. Once you steal the object of your Destiny Quest, you have fulfilled your role in the world. Only then can you once again have the power to take what lies beyond the grasp of all mortals, as you finally recall the full extent of the techniques that allow you to filch the intangible.

Thief of Legend Features

Uncanny Prowess (21st level): You increase your Dexterity score by 2 and increase any other ability score by 2.

Steal Back the Soul (24th level): You can steal anything; even death holds no end to your thievery. You can steal sighs from lovestruck maidens and

Theft of the Intangible

The Thief of Legend's Steal Back the Soul feature grants adventurers the ability to steal intangible objects. Typically, the target of the theft is going to be something abstract, so the DM should be prepared to deal with the consequences of someone having memories stolen, or the loss of their voice, and so on. Typically, such a theft results in the creation of some small, physical object that serves as the repository for the stolen intangible item. The form of this object can vary depending on the thing being stolen, but usually uncomplicated objects such as small vials of liquid or gems/crystals, or any object that can be used as a container and then opened to release the intangible object, work best.

ambition from warlords, and you have stolen your soul from the forces that claim it when you die—for safekeeping, of course. As you begin to slip beyond the mortal realm, you return what you have stolen so few notice it was ever gone.

When you die, after 1 hour your body and possessions vanish. After 24 hours, you reappear alive and at full hit points at a safe place of your choosing, that is familiar to you, and that is on the same plane where you died.

In addition, when you reduce a creature to 0 hit points or fewer, you can steal something intangible from that creature, such as the color of the creature's eyes or its memories of its kingdom. The mechanical effects of this theft, if any, are left to the Dungeon Master.

Impossible Theft (26th level): Already your ability to be the Thief of Legend allows you to twist reality, giving you the ability to steal things others claim to be impossible.

Impossible Theft **Thief of Legend Utility 26**

You deftly lay your hand upon the object of your desire and it vanishes, whisked away to the place you determine.

Daily ✦ Teleportation
Standard Action **Melee** touch
Target: One unattended object or vehicle
Effect: You teleport the target to a safe location that you determine, which must be a place where you have been and on the same plane. This effect cannot harm any creature or the target.

Undetectable Thief (30th level): At last, you have reached the point where you can trick the greatest of the gods and primordials. Even slipping into the Nine Hells and snatching away the scepter from a Lord of the Nine's hand is not beyond you. If they discover something is missing, you can stay hidden from sight, even when your prey is looking right at you.

You gain a passive Stealth score equal to 10 + your Stealth modifier. Any creature that has a passive Perception lower than your passive Stealth score, or that has an active Perception check result that does not equal or surpass your passive Stealth score, cannot see you unless you choose to let that creature see you.

Unyielding Sentinel

Defiant to your last breath, you stand as the lone shield that defends your allies against the onslaught of your enemies.

Prerequisite: Defender role

When you close your eyes and put yourself to rest, visions of an ancient battle rise unbidden to the front of your mind. Wave after wave of your enemies rush toward you. Your allies have already fled, making their way to safety. You volunteered to stay behind, to act as the stopper in the bottle that would keep your enemies from rushing through to their objective. You stood alone, in the face of overwhelming defeat, and yet death did not claim you right away. As the ground became slick with the blood of your enemies, you held their forces at bay. Your allies escaped, and you perished only once their safety was assured.

That was long ago, in another life. The memories of that fateful day, the day in a past life in which you died so that your allies might live, have only begun to return to you as you became powerful enough to embrace such a fate. That day you became a legend, and now you know that you have been reincarnated so that you can once again lay your life on the line to defend your allies. You are the shield that stands between your enemies and those you would protect, and just as you once held many legions at bay, so too will you again let your enemies smash themselves upon you like waves on the rocks.

As you have grown in strength and prowess, the visions of that ancient battle, and others like it fought across many lives, have slowly come into focus. With every step forward, you remember more details and see those memories with more clarity until you can

recall each heroic death in crystal-clear detail. By the time you learn the nature of your Destiny Quest, you have reclaimed memories of dozens of battles, spread across as many centuries, where you acted as the final bulwark against your enemies' assaults. Now, you begin to reclaim many lives' worth of experiences as your own, building upon the knowledge you gained in countless battles against overwhelming odds, once again preparing yourself for the final battle where you might stand alone once more against legions of foes.

Immortality

Each of your past lives has ended in a heroic death staving off a superior number of enemies. Is it your fate to always die alone in order that others might live? Or does each successive death provide you with more knowledge, so that in one incarnation you rise victorious rather than falling to their assault?

Standing Against the Tide: As the conclusion of your Destiny Quest approaches, you know that the time will come when you will stand and face impossible odds. The only question is . . . can you survive it? If you face your enemies head-on, stemming the tide of battle and keeping your allies safe, can you find victory that does not end in death? If you live, your heroic stand becomes the subject of new legends, and for a time you can walk the earth as the living embodiment of your combat prowess. If you fall in battle, your memory will echo through the ages, your sacrifice never forgotten. Shrines might be erected in your honor, and statues might be raised where you fell in battle. Other organizations will look to you as their hero and role model, fashioning an ethos that will carry on for generations based on your heroic death.

Unyielding Sentinel Features

Stalwart Guardian (21st level): You increase your Constitution score by 2 and increase any other ability score by 2.

Unbreakable (24th level): Your enemies can try to pin you down, to weaken you with magic, or to rend your flesh and leave you bleeding out, but no matter what malevolent spells and attacks are hurled at your position, you always find a way to shake off any effects that would impede your ability to defend your allies.

Whenever you make a saving throw (including death saving throws), you roll two dice and keep either result.

Undying Vanguard (26th level): The accumulated knowledge that you have gained by recovering memories of your past lives begins to manifest in a fighting style that is an amalgamation of many styles, both current and long forgotten. In other lives, you've fought overwhelming odds and died defending your friends, and each time, you learned a little more about how to stand when massively outnumbered.

Undying Vanguard Unyielding Sentinel Utility 26

For a moment, your mind slips back into memories of a past life, and you adopt a fighting style forged across hundreds of deaths.

Daily ✦ Stance
Minor Action **Personal**

Effect: You enter the unyielding vanguard stance. Until the stance ends, you cannot be subjected to forced movement unless you choose, you do not grant combat advantage, you automatically reduce all ongoing damage to 0, and you are immune to the auras of your enemies if you choose to be.

Vigor of Battle (30th level): Once the blood of your enemies begins to flow, you cannot be stopped. Arrows and spells fly your way, yet each time you cut down an enemy, you find new ways to shrug off the effects of your wounds to continue fighting. As long as your enemies continue to die by your hand, you cannot be brought low.

Once per round, when you reduce a nonminion enemy to 0 hit points, you regain hit points as though you had spent a healing surge.

About the Author

Rodney Thompson is an RPG designer at Wizards of the Coast. Originally from Chattanooga, TN, his credits for *Dungeons & Dragons* include *Monster Manual 3*, the *Dark Sun Campaign Setting*, *Player Essentials: Heroes of the Fallen Lands*, *Player Essentials: Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*, and *Monster Vault*.

Psionic Traditions:

Methods of the Civilized Mind

By Robert J. Schwalb

Illustration by Adam Paquette

The magic flowing through the planes is endless. Wizards, through complex arcane formulae, harness its power to cast spells. Clerics call upon the gods for divine magic's gifts. Shamans bargain with mercurial spirits to evoke the power constituting their very essence. Psionic power, called magic by some, is different, because it is not "out there" but it is instead inside, waiting to be coaxed out and used to its fullest potential.

The relationship of psionic power to sentient creatures is a complex one, because the energy ebbs and flows, goaded by the world in reaction to dire threats creeping in from outside reality's bonds. As the threat intensifies, so too does the power available in thinking creatures. Conversely, as this threat recedes, so too does the world relax its need, letting psionic magic fade until only the dregs are left for those who recall the means to access them.

Different races approach psionic power in wildly different ways. Some access psionic magic through study, training, and meditation. These folk wrestle with the elusive energy born in their minds so they can call it forth to serve their wills. Others do not know what the power is and might mistake it for a divine blessing, an aspect of the spirit world, or something else entirely.

Over the next few pages, you'll find a broad discussion of various races united by common psionic themes. Each entry details how psionic power fits into their worlds and outlooks, the kinds of people who embrace it, and examples of how certain races and classes fit into the D&D® world. As well, you'll also find new backgrounds designed for psionic characters and feats for each race discussed.

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Civilized Psionic Magic

In the civilized lands, psionic power might be uncommon, but it is rarely the mystery some make it out to be. One can find psionic institutions training fledgling psions in many larger cities, monasteries instructing students in the surrounding countryside, and ardents rallying the common folk to fight back against the encroaching darkness, with the occasional battlemind blowing through town. For many civilized peoples, psionic power is magic in another form. Although some strains of psionic disciplines resemble neither the spells thrown by wizards nor the hexes cast by nefarious assassins, the trappings are similar and so are the end results for those who test their talents. For these reasons, communities engage psionic characters as they would most members of other adventuring classes.

People consult psions for their wisdom or foresight. They also might request that a psion question important prisoners or uncover villains behind dastardly crimes. Monks might serve as peaceful protectors or rowdy warriors mixing it up on the docks to show off their fighting styles. In effect, psionic magic fits within civilized lands.

Civilized Psionic Backgrounds

The following backgrounds work well for psionic characters who come from urban or other civilized areas.

Changeling

"Your hopes and fears are mine to exploit. Witness as I make them my own."

Changelings hide among other races, merging into communities by mimicking their forms and making their customs their own. Their ability to alter their appearance at will is enough for many changelings to blend into their adopted homes, but unless they take extreme care, their disguise is never as perfect as they might wish. Psionic powers can be useful tools for these imposters, giving them another method by which they can mask their true identities.

For changelings, psionic power is not magic but rather an evolution of their own natural talents. Few changelings embrace psionic institutions or cleave to dry philosophies, but instead they develop their talents through haphazard means. Changelings are suited to any psionic class, but they excel as psions, specifically telepath psions. Through the disciplines the changeling masters, he or she can anticipate the thoughts and intentions in people and alter stories to suit his or her needs at the time. Should a changeling be discovered, he or she can tamper with the subject's mind to win the chance to slip away, forgotten and unseen.

Changeling Imposter: You drift from place to place, borrowing identities to help you disappear into the communities to which you travel. Although you can assume any appearance you choose, you find yourself drawn to another's identity so much that you replace the individual. What draws you to impersonation? What tricks have you developed to deflect suspicion? How long do you borrow this identity and are you responsible or reckless with the life you steal?

Associated Skills: Bluff, Streetwise

Psionic Trick

Prerequisite: Changeling, *changeling trick* racial power, any psionic class

Benefit: You do not provoke opportunity attacks from enemies granting combat advantage to you.

Deva

"My past lives are not mere memories but allies who aid in the great purpose for which I was made."

A deva is the sum of his or her lives—one link in a long chain of being going back to Creation's dawn. The memories from past lives swim up in the deva's consciousness, lending new insights into his or her thoughts and actions. These echoes from the past are flitting things, scraps of emotion or recollection the deva can call up as needed. The psionic deva, however, finds that these former identities are more than phantasms; they are individuals, even if bound by the deva's mind.

Psionic energy, then, is the manifestation of these past lives—the psychic aid and support they lend to their current incarnation. Devas prize these prior iterations, consulting them in their dreams and gaining their wisdom when in need. In battle, the deva's psionic energy manifests these allies through the disciplines he or she masters, so that the essence of who he or she once was can shape the outcome of the deva's present self. This shaping is best expressed

through the telekinetic powers which deva psions master. When they use their disciplines, they project a former self through magical force to smash their enemies or scatter them across the battefield. From time to time, glimpses of a deva's past lives might appear on the battlefield, brought forth to carry out the psion's will.

Deva Regressor: Your past lives haunt you from the fringes of your consciousness. They emerge to take charge of your body and mind, then assume your mind's rightful place. In this way, you regress to a former life, recalling events, people, and places from another time. Are you a willing participant in these events or do your past lives bully you? What major personalities are at home in your mind? What are they like when they take control? Are there any cues you can use to let your fellow players know when a different personality has taken control?

Associated Skills: History, Perception

Resurgent Memory

Prerequisite: Deva, *memory of a thousand lifetimes* power, any psionic class

Benefit: When you use *memory of a thousand lifetimes*, you can shift 1 square as a free action. If the triggering attack roll misses or saving throw or check fails, you gain temporary hit points equal to the higher of your Intelligence or Wisdom modifier.

Dragonborn

"The fury burns within me, threatening to consume my soul. I have no choice but to release these vengeful thoughts."

Psionic magic is alien to the dragonborn race, so it is scarcely understood and widely feared. Many dragonborn believe its power represents a malady—an affliction born from madness. Those who use it, approach it with caution. The source of these views lies in past examples of psionic dragonborn, because many come to this talent through great adversity and mental strength. Once gained, dragonborn find this power hard to control. Perhaps the difficulty presented by psionic magic disinclines them from further study. Dragonborn are famous for their commitment to excellence, so something whose secrets and mastery might be out of reach must certainly not be safe to study.

Although dragonborn eschew psionic power, their beliefs about its inappropriateness for them stems largely from ignorance. Long ago, many psionic dragonborn fought against the tieflings in that disastrous struggle, and many laid down their lives to secure any victory they could. Few dragonborn recall their ancestors' accomplishments with psionic magic, and that demonstrates just how far dragonborn have fallen from their lofty heights.

Given their superstitions about psionic magic, when the talent reveals itself in a dragonborn, it is a time of great fear and consternation. The power wells up within a dragonborn and can drive him or her insane if not controlled. The easiest way for dragonborn to manage this power is to release it. Thus many dragonborn with psionic ability go on to become ardents who release their pent-up energy in dazzling waves that can incite their allies to action while dismaying their enemies through fear and doubt.

Dragonborn Madness: You are insane, or at least you believe yourself to be. The thoughts and emotions others experience assail your mind, pushing against your defenses. They manifest as voices in your head—voices that make little sense and serve only to confuse your thoughts. Are these voices real or imagined? How do you silence them? Do they sometimes make sense or are they all meaningless babble?

Associated Skills: Insight, Intimidate

Infectious Wrath

Prerequisite: Dragonborn, Dragonborn Fury racial trait, any psionic class

Benefit: The first time you are bloodied in each encounter, each ally within 5 squares of you gains a +1 racial bonus to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.

Dwarf

"I take heart from the knowledge that my ancestors stand with me against my people's enemies. Can you say the same?"

Psionic magic is not so much a form of magic the dwarves use but rather a method by which they keep score. Through ritualized chants and mental exercises, they recall the misdeeds done against them and channel their ancestral fury to destroy their foes. To an outsider, a dwarf accesses the same conduits utilized by other psionic users, but the way the dwarf draws this energy—the rawness of his or her emotion fueling its flood—sets them apart. Psionic dwarves approach the more magical side of psionic power with the same derision they show for the arcane arts, considering psionic disciplines to be no more than spells by another name. Like dwarf wizards and other arcanists, those who pursue psionic magic's more intellectual side find little friendship among their people.

The most common path psionic dwarves follow is that of the battlemind. Coming to their battle train-

ing through sheer willpower, what they lack in formal training they more than make up for with enthusiasm. These warriors are drifters with few ties binding them to their clans, so they take up with adventuring groups with little reluctance. They are fearless in battle and demonstrate their courage by engaging as many foes as they can.

Oathbound Death-Seeker: You have sworn an oath to your ancestors to avenge some wrong done to your people, and you let your oath carry you into desperate battle. Death holds no fear for you. As long as you acquit yourself well in combat, your ancestors will welcome your sacrifice. What was this wrong that now drives you? Who committed it and why?

Associated Skills: Endurance, Intimidate

Unstoppable Drive

Prerequisite: Dwarf, any psionic class

Benefit: When you use your second wind, you can also shift 1 square as a free action. You must end this movement in a square adjacent to at least one enemy.

Half-Elf

"I use what talents I have."

Combining the versatility of their human parentage with the natural grace and allure of their elven side, half-elves are well-positioned to study and master psionic magic. How they see this power source depends largely on their upbringing. They have gained human sensibilities from human environments and elven ones from elven society. For some it is magic, similar to arcane magic but easier to master. For others it is an awakening—a gradual awareness of the individual's place in the wider world.

Most half-elves have an undisciplined streak that makes nailing down the psion or monk traditions more challenging. Instead, half-elves who develop some psionic talent learn its ins and outs through trial and error, frequently becoming battleminds or ardents as a result. Half-elves can use psionic magic to amplify their natural leadership skills and might gather up followers and hangers-on whether they want them or not.

Wandering Zealot: You champion a god, a belief, or some other cause, and you allow it to eclipse all other considerations. You drift from town to town, preaching your views to any who listen. Those who stop are moved by your words and might leave behind their lives to follow in your steps. What, then, is your cause? How did you come by it? Why do you champion it still?

Associated Skills: Diplomacy, Endurance

Common Cause

Prerequisite: Half-elf, Group Diplomacy racial trait, ardent

Benefit: Whenever an ally benefiting from your Group Diplomacy racial trait uses his or her second wind, that ally also gains 3 temporary hit points.

At 11th level, the ally gains 6 temporary hit points. At 21st level, the ally gains 9 temporary hit points.

Halfling

"I may be small, but I can still kick your ass."

Natural athleticism and fearless dispositions make halflings daring warriors. Although many gravitate toward the martial arts, a few learn to harness their inner power and let it serve their needs. They have little success with the headier techniques employed by psions, but they do find great success as monks, where they can use their size and speed to great effect.

The halflings developed a specialized fighting style to defend their riverboats from pirates. The technique involves using hands and feet to deliver swift strikes in otherwise tight places. These attacks,

Psionic Races

Although any race can master psionic magic through training and focus, for some races, psionic magic is more than just a tool. It is a cornerstone of their culture and history. The following races have strong psionic connections.

Githzerai *(Player's Handbook 3):* These exiles find their inner turmoil reflected in the Elemental Chaos where they make their homes. Through meditation and physical training, they use psionic energy to balance their minds and stabilize their thoughts.

Kalashtar *(*Eberron® *Player's Guide):* Human hosts to refugees escaped from Dal Quor, the region of dreams, the kalashtar are all born with some psionic talent as evidenced in their ability to communicate telepathically.

Shardmind *(Player's Handbook 3):* As surviving fragments from the Living Gate that connected the Astral Sea to the Far Realm, the shardminds are attuned to psionic magic. They possess many psionic-themed traits that make them the quintessential psionic adventurers.

Wilden *(Player's Handbook 3):* Many wilden draw on psionic magic as a means to defeat enemies after the world awakened the wilden to combat the Far Realm's intrusion.

when combined with maneuvers designed to navigate obstacles, make these formidable guardians a terror to unsuspecting raiders.

River Guardian: You have trained in the Flowing River, a fighting style devised by your people. On mastering the art, you traveled with your people, watching out for bandits and raiders, while working alongside the crew. What places did you visit? Did you travel through dangerous lands? What sorts of enemies did you face? What made you leave this work?

Associated Skills: Acrobatics, Perception

Flowing River Style

Prerequisite: Halfling, *second chance* racial power, monk

Benefit: When a monk power allows you to shift, if you have not yet used your *second chance* power, you can enter enemies' spaces during this shift. You must end this movement in an unoccupied square.

Human

"My mind is my weapon, and you are my target."

Humans have known psionic power since the dawn of their earliest civilizations. As an adaptable and capable people, humanity has proven time and again its ability to master whatever it sets out to learn, and psionic magic is no exception. Humans have founded several psionic institutions to teach students how to control their budding powers, and they seem driven to push beyond the bounds of what should be possible. Humanity's ingenuity and versatility helps humans to excel in any psionic class.

Psionic Descendant: You claim descent from a great psionic hero who fought against aliens from the Far Realm long ago. Who was this person? What were some of his or her greatest accomplishments? How did your ancestor's presence in your family's history shape your choices?

Associated Skills: Arcana, History

Courageous Mind

Prerequisite: Human, any psionic class

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus to initiative. In addition, you gain a +1 bonus to saving throws while you are bloodied.

Tiefling

"I will split wide your skull and set fire to your brain. How's that for subtle?"

Before they were tieflings, the people of Bael Turath were human, and they had discovered psionic magic long ago. After their transformation, psionic magic and its users declined. By the time their empire fell, it had faded almost entirely from them as a people. Since tieflings have no lands of their own, most encounter psionic magic from their human neighbors and, with the right convincing, can learn to harness their own power.

Tieflings, being a cerebral people, favor the more studious aspects of psionic magic and find much success as telepathic psions. They choose disciplines designed to inflict pain or take command of their enemies. A tiefling's attacks leave sinister impressions on his or her opponents, with appalling visions, the feeling of being burned alive, or facing agonizing torture being the most common.

Turathi Inquisitor: You learned the ancient interrogation techniques used by the Turathi Inquisitors in a time now nearly forgotten. Having studied these methods, you can tease out information from the most unwilling subjects, breaking them with subtle threats and light applications of pain that build until they finally snap. Do these techniques sicken you or do you delight in the power they offer? Where did you come by this learning? Were you on the receiving end?

Associated Skills: Bluff, Intimidate

Mindfire Disciple

Prerequisite: Tiefling, any psionic class

Benefit: When an enemy saves against an effect bestowed by your psychic attack, you slide the enemy 1 square and the enemy gains vulnerable 5 psychic until the end of your next turn.

About the Author

Robert J. Schwalb is an award-winning game designer who has contributed design to or developed over one hundred roleplaying game titles for Dungeons & Dragons®, *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*, *A Song of Ice and Fire* RPG, *Star Wars* RPG, and the d20 system. Some of his more recent work for Wizards of the Coast is in *Player's Handbook 3*, *Martial Power 2*, and *Draconomicon 2: Metallic Dragons*. In addition, he's a regular contributor to both *Dragon* and *Dungeon* Magazines. Robert lives, works, and will probably die in Tennessee.

Heirs of Prophecy

By James Wyatt
Illustration by William O'Connor & Ben Wootten

"For those of us who bear the more common dragonmarks, the mark is our destiny, not just our duty. It is how we fit into the symphony of the world, the part we play. I carry the Mark of Warding. It is not a decoration—it's who I am. I am a warder, a Ghorad'din. It is written in my very being."

—Ossa d'Kundarak, in Dragon War

Dragonmarked characters in the world of Eberron are specially touched by the Draconic Prophecy, a prophecy that weaves the fate of the world together and is written on their skin. Your dragonmarked character has a particular role to play in the Prophecy.

House Specialist

Many dragonmarked characters are specialists in the work of their house, as translated into the life of an adventurer. These characters are the most iconic dragonmarked ones, and they embody what their mark—and their house, if applicable—is all about. They typically choose a class that allows them to make the most out of their dragonmark feat and suits them for the paragon path associated with their mark.

This section summarizes the race and class choice that is most iconic for characters with each dragonmark. It assumes that you're connected to the house associated with your dragonmark, so your race matches the race of the house.

Mark of Detection: Half-elf ranger. Choose the Archer Fighting Style and ranged powers to make the best use of your paragon path benefits, and emphasize Perception and feats that improve your ranged attacks.

Mark of Finding: Half-orc or human ranger. In contrast to a House Medani ranger, you'll get more mileage from a melee-oriented Fighting Style.

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Mark of Handling: Human ranger. Choose the Beast Mastery class feature to make the most use of your dragonmark feat and meet the prerequisites for the paragon path.

Mark of Healing: Halfling cleric or bard. Most Jorasco healers are not front-line fighters, and your paragon path powers encourage keeping a safe distance from melee.

Mark of Hospitality: Halfling warlord or cleric. The front line is definitely your place in battle if you adopt the Ghallanda sanctuary guardian paragon path.

Mark of Making: Human artificer or wizard. It's worth making use of the ritual aspect of your dragonmark to learn creation rituals and use alchemical items to maximize your party's effectiveness in facing whatever threats come your way.

Mark of Passage: Human rogue or ranger. You might instead be a fighter or swordmage who leans toward the striker role. Your mark is all about movement, so choose powers that give it to you, whether it's shifting or teleporting. Then use that movement to get in and out of melee range with your enemies, hitting them and getting away before they can hit you back.

Mark of Scribing: Gnome wizard or bard. Your mastery of languages makes you valuable in situations that require talking, as does your Diplomacy bonus. If you choose the path of the Sivis truenamer, you lean heavily toward control, and wizard or even invoker is probably your best class choice.

Mark of Sentinel: Human fighter. Your dragonmark helps you pin your enemies down even better than other fighters, and the Deneith protector paragon path highlights your defender abilities still further.

Mark of Shadow: Elf bard or wizard if you're connected to House Phiarlan, or elf rogue or assassin if you're tied to House Thuranni. Focus on stealth and invisibility to make the best use of your mark.

Mark of Storm: Half-elf sorcerer or wizard. If you're a sorcerer, you'll find particular synergy with the Storm Magic class feature presented in *Arcane Power* (page 26). Look for thunder or lightning powers that benefit from your dragonmark, and you'll find plenty of use for those powers in connection with the Lyrandar wind-rider paragon path as well.

Mark of Warding: Dwarf rogue or ranger if you're aiming for the Kundarak Ghorad'din paragon path, or fighter otherwise. A rogue or ranger can gain significant benefit from the power of the dragonmark (look for powers that grant a bonus to AC, in particular), and a fighter or other defender enjoys the improved marking feature the dragonmark offers. Stealthier characters excel as members of the Ghorad'din.

Dragonmarked Dabbler

You can also dabble in the work normally associated with your dragonmark. The dragonmark feats give you access to rituals that fit with the theme of your mark. Mastering and performing these rituals can go a long way toward reinforcing the idea that your dragonmark gives you exceptional abilities.

Multiclass feats can give you access to powers outside your usual capabilities, but rather than suggest that your character has actively studied the ways and powers of a different class, you might say that your dragonmark bestows the appropriate powers on you.

For example, you might be a halfling fighter connected to House Jorasco with the Mark of Healing and Student of Battle feats. Perhaps you didn't actively study the path of the warlord, but your dragonmark accounts for the two benefits of the Student of Battle feat: your membership in House Jorasco exposed you to the study of healing (thus your training in the Heal skill), and the magical power of the mark gives you the use of a single *inspiring word* each day.

With your DM's permission, you might also tweak the benefit of a multiclass feat to reflect the power of your dragonmark. For example, if you're a Lyrandar rogue with the Mark of Storm, you might take the Arcane Prodigy feat and alter the benefit of the feat so that your bonus damage is lightning and thunder damage. (This change is almost power-neutral. It gives you a slight edge against creatures that are vulnerable to lightning or thunder damage, but such creatures are extremely rare. Creatures that are resistant or immune to both lightning and thunder damage also ignore your extra damage.)

Heir of Siberys

"My destiny, too, is written in my dragonmark. Not service to my house, but . . . something more."

Prerequisite: 21st level

Most dragonmarked individuals manifest their marks in adolescence, when heirs of the dragonmarked houses undergo a rite called the Test of Siberys. This test puts the young heirs into stressful situations in the hopes that their marks will manifest. Siberys dragonmarks, however, break all the rules.

The magic of a Siberys dragonmark is powerful and fundamentally unpredictable. The mark is larger and more elaborate than the normal mark in its family, but it's rare for a normal mark to develop into a Siberys mark—more often, Siberys marks appear on older members of the house who were previously unmarked. Even more so than the common dragonmarks, a Siberys mark is viewed as the touch of the Prophecy—a character's inextricable link to the destiny of the world.

The dragonmarked houses keep a careful eye on members who bear Siberys marks. If a Siberys mark can be used in the service of the house, the house's leaders are content to let it, but a Siberys heir who does not remain firmly under the house's control is likely to become the target of assassins.

In game terms, a character can adopt the Heir of Siberys epic destiny to reflect the presence of this exceptional mark. Most characters with Siberys dragonmarks did not previously have a dragonmark, but a character who already has a dragonmarked feat isn't prevented from taking this paragon path.

This is a generic destiny that any Heir of Siberys can choose, though the utility power the destiny bestows at 26th level depends on the character's specific Siberys dragonmark. You can also craft unique epic destinies for each Siberys mark or even for each individual with such a mark. Heirs of Siberys, by their nature, defy easy categorization and have little in common with each other or with other dragonmarked characters.

Immortality

Your destiny is written in the Prophecy, and it is greater than the short span of your mortal life. As the Prophecy writes itself on your skin, you gain an increasing depth of understanding into its meaning and the various ways it can be fulfilled. What's more, you begin to understand that while you are a player in a cosmic drama, you are also the playwright, master of your own destiny, and not bound to any single vision of the future, whatever the Prophecy might say.

The Eternal Prophecy: When you complete whatever the Prophecy has in store for you—or whatever destiny you wrote into the Prophecy for yourself—you might disappear from the world for a time. But just as prophetic marks appear written on the bones of the earth, your Siberys mark is a part of the world. The Prophecy is Eberron, Eberron is the Prophecy, and you are equally part of both. If the world needs you in the future, you might choose to manifest once more in flesh forever altered by the mark of the Prophecy on your skin.

Heir of Siberys Features

Blessing of Siberys (21st level): Increase two ability scores of your choice by 2.

Will of Siberys (21st level): Each time you fail a saving throw against an effect that a save can end, you gain a cumulative +2 bonus to saving throws against that effect until the effect ends.

Lifeblood of Siberys (24th level): Once per day, when you are reduced to 0 hit points or fewer or you fail a death saving throw, you can spend 2 healing surges.

Speaker of Prophecy (30th level): When you miss every target with an encounter attack power, the power is not expended.

Heir of Siberys Powers

You gain one of the following powers at 26th level, depending on the specific Siberys mark you possess.

Siberys Mark of Detection — Heir of Siberys Utility 26

Nothing can be hidden from you.

Daily
Minor Action — **Personal**
Effect: You gain blindsight 10 until the end of the encounter.

Siberys Mark of Finding — Heir of Siberys Utility 26

Your dragonmark flares as you gaze at your foe. Now nothing can prevent you from hunting down your enemy.

Daily
Minor Action — **Ranged** 20
Target: One creature
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, the target grants combat advantage to you. Your attacks against the target deal 1d6 extra damage. The target does not benefit from cover or concealment against you as long as you can see the target, and you know the target's precise location. If the target is more than 3 squares away from you at the start of your turn, you can teleport to any square within 5 squares of the target as a move action.

Siberys Mark of Handling — Heir of Siberys Utility 26

You grant a beast or summoned creature its own mind and will.

Daily
Standard Action **Personal**

Effect: You gain an extra standard action each turn until the end of the encounter. You can use this action only to use an at-will beast power or to command a summoned creature. Alternatively, your mount can use this extra action to attack.

Siberys Mark of Healing — Heir of Siberys Utility 26

Healing energy spreads out from you to bolster your allies, especially those who are near death.

Daily ✦ Healing
Minor Action **Close** burst 10
Target: You and each ally in burst

Effect: The target regains hit points as if he or she had spent 2 healing surges, or 3 healing surges if he or she is bloodied.

Siberys Mark of Hospitality — Heir of Siberys Utility 26

You create a zone of safe refuge around yourself.

Daily ✦ Healing, Zone
Standard Action **Close** burst 2

Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter or until you move. You and any ally gain a +2 power bonus to all defenses while within the zone. If you or an ally spends a healing surge while within the zone, that character regains 20 additional hit points. Your allies can teleport 10 squares to any square within the zone as a move action.

Siberys Mark of Making — Heir of Siberys Utility 26

What your magic has wrought, your dragonmark makes real.

Daily
Minor Action **Personal**

Effect: Until the end of the encounter, you automatically sustain any of your powers that normally require a minor action to sustain without spending an action. You sustain such powers even if you are stunned or unconscious.

Siberys Mark of Passage — Heir of Siberys Utility 26

You open a passage that transcends the limits of space, inviting your allies to follow you through it.

Daily ✦ Teleportation
Move Action **Personal**

Effect: You teleport 20 squares, and each ally adjacent to your starting position can teleport to a square adjacent to your new location. Neither you nor a teleporting ally needs to see your destination.

Siberys Mark of Scribing — Heir of Siberys Utility 26

You scribe the Prophetic symbols that spell your enemies' doom.

Daily ✦ Zone
Standard Action **Area** burst 1 within 10 squares

Effect: The burst becomes a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter. Enemies within the zone gain vulnerable 10 to all damage, and your allies can score critical hits against enemies within the zone on a natural attack roll of 19–20.

Siberys Mark of Sentinel — Heir of Siberys Utility 26

You become the perfect sentinel, unwavering in your dedication to your task.

Daily
Minor Action — **Personal**

Effect: Until the end of the encounter, you gain a +5 power bonus to your Will, and you automatically succeed on saving throws against charm effects.

Siberys Mark of Shadow — Heir of Siberys Utility 26

Pulling the shadows around you, you disappear from view.

Daily ✦ Illusion
Minor Action — **Personal**

Effect: Until the end of the encounter, you are invisible to any creature against which you have any cover or concealment.

Siberys Mark of Storm — Heir of Siberys Utility 26

Howling winds swirl around you and thunder rumbles in the sky.

Daily ✦ Zone
Standard Action — **Close** burst 3

Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the encounter. The zone is difficult terrain for creatures on the ground. When a creature flies to a square within the zone, you can slide that creature a number of squares equal to its fly speed as an opportunity action, and then its movement ends. You can fly your speed and hover while within the zone. In addition, thunder and lightning attacks deal 1d10 extra damage against targets within the zone.

Siberys Mark of Warding — Heir of Siberys Utility 26

You create a nigh-impenetrable barrier to protect your allies.

Daily ✦ Zone
Standard Action — **Close** burst 3

Effect: The burst becomes a zone that lasts until the end of your next turn. Enemies can't enter the zone, and allies gain a +2 power bonus to their defenses while within the zone. The zone ends if a creature inside the zone attacks a creature outside the zone.

Sustain Minor: The zone persists.

About the Author

James Wyatt is the Creative Manager for D&D R&D at Wizards of the Coast. He was one of the lead designers for 4th Edition D&D and the primary author of the 4th Edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*. He also contributed to the *Eberron Campaign Setting* and is the author of several Dungeons & Dragons novels set in the world of Eberron.

Class Acts: Assassins of the Gloaming Dance

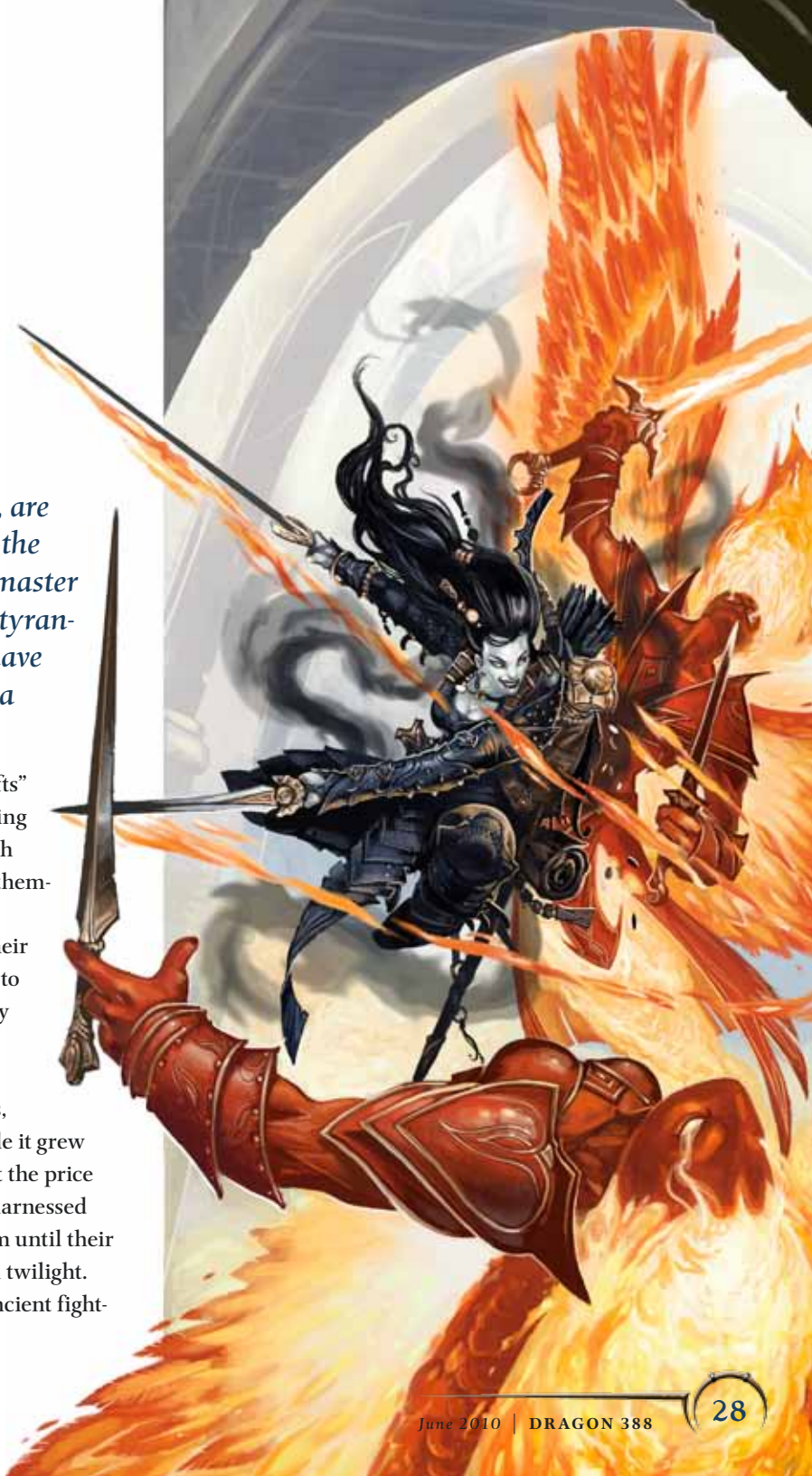
By Robert J. Schwalb
Illustration by Ben Wootten

Scattered across the world, where they control vast regions and kingdoms, are the assassins' guilds. Each complex and sinister organization focuses on the business of killing, and they recognize no authority but that of the guildmaster who rules them. However, some whisper of killers who fight against the guilds' tyrannical hold on murder, mayhem, and intrigue. Speaking the name of any who have gone up against the guilds invites retribution from these guilds—retribution of a kind that few survive.

The assassins of the Gloaming Dancers are one of the most reviled assassin cults at large in the world, and they have gone up against various assassins' guilds in the past. Though no more sinister than their peers, the assassins of this cult have a high level of disobedience. In the past, they have laughed at the guildmasters and their demands, scoffed at their threats, and done as they wished without regard for the consequences. In fact, they still do all these things when they feel the circumstances warrant them.

One can attribute the Gloaming Dancers' success to many factors. They can trace their line back to the time when mortals fled to the Shadowfell to escape age's infirmity and death's demand by vowing constant service to the Raven Queen. The ones who later became the Dancers were shadar-kai who were duped like their fellows into selling their souls and bodies to the Raven Queen in exchange for eternal youth. Balking at the steep cost for her "gifts" and with ennui and discorporation weighing them down, a few cut their ties to the death goddess and rejected all masters, placing themselves above the gods. They brokered with the Shadowfell's dread powers, offering their shattered souls in exchange for the power to move freely between worlds and do as they pleased.

The seething malevolence haunting the dark lands complied with their wishes, offering them shadow magic's secrets while it grew bloated on the soul energy they offered. At the price of empowering this thing, the renegades harnessed shadow magic and let it flow through them until their bodies became as indistinct as shadows in twilight. They blended the new magic with their ancient fight-



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ing styles, a marriage that gave them speed, mobility, and a deadly ferocity few could match.

Through the generations, the ancestors died out, withdrew from the world, or otherwise vanished, but their methods survived in their students, who in turn passed them along to their pupils and so on through the long centuries. Now, the Gloaming Dancers are a motley band, with loose connections to one another.

The assassins' guilds have tried at various times to absorb the Gloaming Dancers into their ranks and steal their techniques for themselves, but the Dancers are not so easily cowed. Each time the guilds sought to exert their influence, they faced bitter war and strife which, in some cases, shattered one or more of the guilds. After a half dozen or so abortive efforts, the guilds struck an accord with the renegades, asking for peace in exchange for an alliance that would benefit both sides. The Dancers were welcome to join the guilds but would retain their own identities, customs, and techniques. A few refused, but many more agreed to an alliance that was convenient for their purposes. Now an uneasy peace exists between the renegades and the guilds—a peace that will last only as long as the guilds uphold their agreements and the Dancers find it profitable to stick around.

The Gloaming Dancer Technique

The Gloaming Dancers might work with other assassins, true or otherwise, but they loathe sharing their secrets with outsiders. Only those candidates who demonstrate natural talent, who despise authority, and who are willing to cede a portion of their souls are invited to learn the Dancers' higher mysteries.

The masters purge any treachery hidden in their students through merciless training, a process many initiates do not survive. The rare few who survive the training emerge as warriors as deadly as any shadow killer and indoctrinated with a paradox—hatred for authority combined with unquestioning loyalty to their own master.

The Dancers' mystique stems largely from their secrecy. In fact, they are largely like other assassins. Where they differ is in the tactics they use. Few assassins go toe-to-toe with their enemy, preferring a subtle hand (treachery and ambush, in other words) to a direct confrontation. The Dancers take this tendency a step further by using shadow magic to speed themselves around the battlefield, slipping through shadows to strike from unexpected directions while sowing panic and confusion wherever they go. A Dancer rarely goes for the quick kill, preferring instead to bleed out his or her opponent as a sign of respect. Dancers never talk to their opponents but communicate through their weapons and sudden, darting movements. These killers prefer weapons that challenge their training. Spiked chains, light blades, and other exotic weapons are the most common in their arsenals.

New Hexes

No one can anticipate where the gloaming dancer will strike because all one ever sees is a fleeting glimpse, a bit of color, or a flashing blade, and then the dancer is gone.

Converging Shadows Assassin Utility 2

Darkness gathers to shelter you from harm.

Encounter ✦ Shadow
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: You are targeted by a melee or ranged attack
Effect: You gain concealment until the end of your next turn. If the Triggering attack misses, you can make a Stealth check to hide.

Darkening Veil Assassin Utility 10

You punch a hole into the Shadowfell to call forth dark mist in billowing plumes.

Daily ✦ Shadow, Teleportation, Zone
Minor Action **Area** burst 1 within 5 squares
Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of your next turn. Squares inside the zone are lightly obscured for all creatures other than you. While the zone remains, you can take the following action.
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You take damage from an attack
Effect: After the Triggering attack is resolved, teleport 5 squares into an unoccupied square adjacent to or inside the zone.
Sustain Minor: The zone persists.

Spectral Assailants Assassin Attack 13

Your enemies' shadows come to life to claw and menace as you direct, creating the perfect distraction so you can beat a hasty retreat.

Encounter ✦ Fear, Implement, Necrotic, Shadow
Standard Action **Close** burst 2
Target: Each enemy in burst
Attack: Dexterity vs. Will
Hit: 2d6 + Dexterity modifier necrotic damage. Until the end of your next turn, the target cannot take opportunity actions, and you can slide the target 1 square as a free action each time it takes damage.
Effect: You can use *shadow step* as a minor action until the end of your next turn.

Blood Shadows — Assassin Attack 15

Your enemy's spilled vitality calls forth animate darkness to aid your bloody work.

Daily ✦ Conjuration, Shadow, Teleportation, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Special: If you are hidden from the target, you can teleport 2 squares to a square adjacent to the target before the attack.
Hit: 4[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You conjure four blood shadows in 4 different unoccupied squares within 5 squares of the target. The blood shadows occupy their squares and last until the end of the encounter. The blood shadows can be attacked; each is insubstantial and has 8 hit points. The blood shadows count as creatures for the purpose of your *shadow step* power, and bloodied enemies grant combat advantage while adjacent to a blood shadow.

Gloaming Call — Assassin Utility 16

Swirling black plumes gush from the ground, offering shelter from and passage to your prey.

Encounter ✦ Conjuration, Shadow, Teleportation
Move Action **Close** burst 10
Effect: You conjure one gloaming in each of 4 different unoccupied squares in the burst. A gloaming has no substance and does not interfere with movement, line of sight, or line of effect. Each gloaming remains until the end of the encounter or until consumed by use of the following power. While you have at least one gloaming, you can use the following power.
Immediate Reaction **Personal**
Trigger: You take damage from an attack
Effect: You teleport to a square that one gloaming you can see is in and become invisible until the start of your next turn. That gloaming is consumed.

Shadow Knives — Assassin Attack 17

Inky darkness flows from your body, and within its blackest depths are the instruments of your opponent's defeat.

Encounter ✦ Shadow, Teleportation, Weapon, Zone
Standard Action **Close** burst 2
Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of your next turn. The zone blocks line of sight for all creatures other than you, and any creature other than you is blinded while entirely within the zone. While the zone remains, you can make the following attack.
Free Action **Melee** weapon
Trigger: An enemy starts its turn within the zone
Effect: Before the attack, you can shift 1 square.
Target: The Triggering enemy
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] damage, and the target is slowed and dazed until the end of its next turn.
Miss: You teleport to any unoccupied square within the zone.
Aftereffect: You become invisible and you can teleport up to 5 squares.

Murderous Shadow — Assassin Attack 19

Your opponent's shadow comes to life, warping and twisting until it becomes your monstrous thrall.

Daily ✦ Fear, Implement, Psychic, Shadow, Summoning
Minor Action **Ranged** 5
Effect: You summon a Medium murderous shadow in a square adjacent to one enemy in range. The murderous shadow has the adjacent enemy's speed and all its movement modes. The shadow also has insubstantial, phasing, and vulnerable 5 radiant. You can give the murderous shadow the following special commands.
Standard Action: Melee 1 (one creature); Dexterity vs. Reflex; 2d6 + Dexterity modifier psychic damage, the shadow pushes the target 3 squares, and the shadow shifts 3 squares to a square adjacent to the target.
Standard Action: The shadow teleports 5 squares and makes the following attack at the end of this movement: close burst 1 (creatures in burst); Dexterity vs. Will; 1d6 + Dexterity modifier psychic damage, and the shade slides the target 1 square.
Instinctive Effect: If you haven't given the shadow any commands by the end of your turn, it uses its first attack against a random creature adjacent to it.

Gloaming Dance — Assassin Utility 22

Shadow energy bleeds from you, whisking you away to the Shadowfell at your command.

Daily ✦ Shadow, Stance, Teleportation
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You enter the stance of the twilight dance. Until the stance ends, add 2 to the number of squares you teleport using *shadow step*. In addition, whenever you miss your *assassin's shroud* target with an attack in which you invoked your shrouds, you become invisible until the start of your next turn.

Gloaming Dancer

I am everywhere and nowhere. I am death's specter, and I am here to claim your soul.

Prerequisite: Assassin

You have mastered the elementary lessons required by your Gloaming Dancer instructors. As a reward, they usher you into the higher mysteries of their tradition. The secrets they impart reveal the Shadowfell's ubiquity and how to harness the dark magic flowing from the plane of shadow into the mortal realm until you can step between worlds with ease. The shadows rise up at your command, tearing open the gaps you need to dance across the battlefield unchecked and giving you opportunities you can use to land the killing blow.

Gloaming Dancer Path Features

Dancing Action (11th level): When you spend an action point to take an extra action, you can also teleport 5 squares. If you do not, you can teleport 5 squares as a minor action once before the end of your next turn.

Sinister Shadows (11th level): You gain a +2 bonus to Stealth checks. In addition, whenever a shadow power lets you teleport, increase the distance you can teleport by 1 square.

Shadow Blend (16th level): When you subject an enemy to three or more shrouds, you can remove two shrouds to animate the enemy's shadows until the end of the encounter or until you use *assassin's shroud* against a different target. While the enemy's shadows are animate, you gain combat advantage against that enemy and concealment from that enemy's attacks.

Gloaming Dancer Hexes

Penumbral Leap Gloaming Dancer Attack 11

Weaving shadows, you step through them to deliver a punishing wound to your enemy.

Encounter ✦ Shadow, Teleportation, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Effect: Teleport 5 squares.
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and the target is weakened until the end of your next turn.
Effect: You can use *shadow step* as a minor action until the end of your next turn.

Shadow Dance Gloaming Dancer Utility 12

You flit through shadows to stay one step ahead of your enemy.

Daily ✦ Shadow, Stance, Teleportation
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You use *shadow step*.
Effect: You enter the stance of the shadow dance. Until this stance ends, you can *shadow step* as a minor action and while you are within 2 squares of a creature.

Flickering Shadow Gloaming Dancer Attack 20

You become a living shadow, flickering and dancing at your enemy's periphery.

Daily ✦ Shadow, Teleportation, Weapon, Zone
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You create a zone in a close burst 5. The zone lasts until the end of your next turn. Squares within the zone are lightly obscured. Whenever you hit with an assassin attack power while you are within the zone, you can teleport to any square within the zone and make a Stealth check to become hidden. While within the zone, you are insubstantial to attacks from enemies from which you are hidden.

New Feats

In addition to the new hexes, the following feats expand mobility options for any assassin who places a high value on staying one step ahead of the enemy.

Heroic Tier Feats

The following feats are suitable for any character who meets the prerequisites.

Darting Shade

Prerequisite: Assassin, *shade form* power, *shadow step* power

Benefit: Whenever you take damage from an attack while you are in *shade form*, you can use *shadow step* as a free action after the attack is resolved.

Leaping Shadows

Prerequisite: Assassin, *shadow step* power

Benefit: Whenever you reduce an enemy to 0 hit points, you can use *shadow step* as a free action.

Paragon Tier Feats

Feats in this section are available to any characters of 11th level and above who meet the prerequisites.

Death's Pall

Prerequisite: 11th level, assassin, *assassin's shroud* power

Benefit: While you are adjacent to a creature subject to one or more of your assassin's shrouds, you have concealment from all creatures that are not subject to your assassin's shrouds. If the adjacent creature is subject to three or more of your assassin's shrouds, you have total concealment instead of concealment.

Drawn Shadows

Prerequisite: 11th level, assassin

Benefit: You have concealment while you are within 2 squares of a square containing dim light or darkness.

Epic Tier Feats

The feat in this section is available to any characters of 21st level and above who meet the prerequisites.

Untouchable Shade

Prerequisite: 21st level, assassin, *shadow step* power

Benefit: When you use *shadow step*, you become insubstantial to any attacks from creatures subject to one or more of your shrouds.

About the Author

Robert J. Schwalb is an award-winning game designer who has contributed design to or developed over one hundred role-playing game titles for Dungeons & Dragons®, *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*, *A Song of Ice and Fire RPG*, *Star Wars RPG*, and the *d20 system*. Some of his more recent work for Wizards of the Coast can be found in *Player's Handbook 3*, *Martial Power 2*, *Draconomicon 2: Metallic Dragons*, and in the pages of both *Dragon* and *Dungeon* magazines. Robert lives in Tennessee.

Class Acts: Wizards

By Daniel Jones
Illustration by Ben Wootten

"Barricade? All I see is kindling."
–Surrica Bren, pyromancer

Fire is everywhere, and everywhere it exists, destruction also exists. From the churning magma down a volcano's gullet to the towering flames that can consume an entire forest overnight, fire reveals itself through its majestic spectacle of devastation. The civilized races hurry to overlook this aspect of fire. They tuck it into hearths, bury it in forges, and bandy it around on tapers until they forget its nature. Soon they mistake it for a friend. They put it on their streets, in their houses, and next to their children. In the darkness or the cold, they huddle around it for comfort. When tragedy strikes they realize the truth: Only the foolish think fire is tamed.

For those who seek to master fire, knowing that it cannot be tamed completely is the first and most critical lesson. No pyromancer can hope to live if he or she believes otherwise. A pyromancer's weapon is ferocity embodied; each can employ it, direct it, and perhaps contain it. Control of fire is an illusion. Every spell is first a battle to wrestle primordial power into the confines of will. Fire submits for no one easily, however, and it draws no distinctions between sides in a conflict. It can as readily annihilate a sloppy wizard as that wizard's foe.

If one is willing to strive against such perilous intractability, the rewards are great: Little can match the awesome potency of flame. It might devour the careless, but the careful can unleash its insatiable hunger against whatever they desire. With sufficient skill and daring, they might transform its wildness into a weapon. If they lack such skill, they had best avoid the attempt. Fire brooks no half-measures. When a wizard pursues pyromancy, only two outcomes remain: mastery or death.

Point of Origin

Why fire magic? Beneath the illusion of control lies an element most mortals fear instinctively. They say (and justifiably so) that pursuing fire is madness. Yet it has pursuers enough—courtiers even—who seek to claim its strength or bend its power to their desires. Their motives are sometimes simple, but no two are alike.

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Below are several examples of how a wizard might approach the use of fire and how he or she perceives fire magic. The first few emphasize the wizard's use of fire, the second the wizard's relationship with fire, and the third how the wizard perceives fire's role in the world. These categories aren't intended to be hard and fast delineations—they're just a helpful framework.

It's All in How You Use It

The Artist: Fire is your chosen instrument and no one can play it better. It might seem chaotic to the ignorant or impatient, but to you, the maestro, it's a thing of beauty. In fact, fire's intractability appeals to you; mastering a rebellious medium is proof of skill.

As an artist, you're all about the show. You want to make your enemies (and your allies) tremble before your majesty. In combat, you deftly maneuver until you can unleash a spectacular performance. "Simple destruction" is beneath you. Outside combat, you play with fires, punctuate speeches with special effects, and loudly recount past exploits. Why do something if you're not going to do it with style?

How did you gain your tremendous skill? Why is showmanship so important to you? Are you a shallow narcissist, or do you just act like one?

The Professional: Do one thing, and do it well—that's your motto. It bothers you that everyone assumes a wizard must diversify. A master smith is content to be just a smith, so why must wizards be any different? Fire is your job and you take pride in doing that one job well. If your party doesn't want a thing burned, let the group find another wizard.

As a professional, you focus on getting the job done. Effectiveness trumps style every time. In combat you proceed deliberately and with discipline, husbanding your resources for maximum effectiveness throughout numerous encounters. Outside combat, when you're not rigorously perfecting your craft, you are likely just as conscientious and straightforward.

How long have you practiced your pyromantic profession? What started you down this path? Did you choose fire for personal reasons, or was it another choice of efficiency?

Example Pyromancer: Jolruth, Flame of the Frozen North

No one values what is attained easily. In the frigid wasteland of the far north, nothing comes easily. Even lighting a simple fire becomes a struggle for survival. In the south, people might have candles on every table, lamps at every street corner, and fires just for celebrating holidays. They are weak because of it.

Jolruth, as a native of the north, knows the value and power of fire. Among his people he is one of its revered caretakers and has exhaustively sought to understand and master it. No fire he lights is wasted; nothing extinguishes a fire against his will.

In the eyes of his rugged but desperate people, such skill is more valuable than gems or gold. A terrible danger has emerged and threatens to destroy them. An ancient ritual, barely more than a whisper out of myth, must be recovered and performed. The frightened community chose Jolruth, its most talented and powerful wizard, for the journey to regain this ritual and destroy that which threatens them.

Only he is strong enough. The soft southern sheep with their easy lives are ill-equipped to help; what could they do? Only he is skilled enough. No one else could hope to perform the ritual if he finds it. Only he has a chance for success.

A chance, but he has little time.

Nothing More than Feelings

The Phobic: Only you fully understand how dangerous the flames truly are. You know their hunger, feel their power, and understand the frailty of the balance that leaves the common folk untouched. Fire is your nemesis; you study it so that you can master it and someday, perhaps, be safe.

As a phobic, your character is necessarily ironic, but irony can be either lighthearted or bitter. Perhaps you prefer the comic hero, besotted with nervous twitches and prone to outlandish antics when terrified. In combat, you yelp and flee from your own powers. Outside combat, you're nervous around candles. Perhaps, though, you're a grimly tormented character, scarred by the constant companionship of your nightmare. You despise your own gift but can't deny it entirely. When the chips are down and people are relying on you, you grit your teeth and do what you must.

In either case, what caused this consuming fear of fire? Why do you use the thing you dread?

The Zealot: The flames are an expression of your passion. They are your consuming rage or your purifying righteousness. The connection might reflect some significant belief or it might be coincidence, but its existence is manifest. When you feel strongly, enemies best beware of fire.

As a zealot, you likely devote less time than other pyromancers to thoughts of fire. Your passion is your focus; fire is at best a vehicle for it, but frequently a mere byproduct of it. You might be a different person when indifferent or uninvolved. Wherever your passion obtrudes, however, fire emerges, even

in noncombat situations. (Perhaps you're famous for prestidigitating fires rather than swearing.) When combat finally starts, you burn everything.

What passion drives you? From where did that passion come? Is your connection with fire intentional or incidental?

Example Pyromancer: Kasali, Remainder Among the Ashes

The adage suggests that all is fair in war. Kasali is that adage's fruit. First conscripted when barely a teenager, she learned magic through an apprenticeship of desperation and attrition. Her survival instinct nurtured her adaptability and pragmatism. Her fear taught her speed and, most importantly, that there is no such thing as overkill.

Each lesson left a scar—she has ten years of scars now—but she learned well. In her, the crucible of constant war produced a titanic force guided by a simple attitude: Fill a room with enough roiling flames and it will probably be safe afterward. Certain delicate people might criticize the violence of her methods, but they always want her on their side. The pretentious might object to the brutishness of her magic, but they've never fought just to survive.

That's all Kasali does. She fights and destroys because she needs money to eat and to pay for shelter. Ultimately, she fights so that she can make it to another day of fighting. The senselessness of it weighs on her. She has never found any semblance of purpose or an underlying truth to justify so much struggle. She has to hope that one exists, however. Hoping is integral to survival.

She'll keep looking for justification for as long as she can.

Ashes to Ashes

The Naturalist: Others might harbor prejudices, but you understand that fire has served an essential function in the cycle of life. It's the tool for both destruction and rebirth. That reality, the necessity and unaffectedness of it, inspires you. You perceive the big picture and eagerly pursue your role in it.

As a naturalist, you see fire as the perfect implement to accomplish a great task, whether it is a beneficent facilitation of rebirth or a malevolent hastening of overdue justice. Your focus is the cycle that your actions express. You might see yourself as a single note in the complicated harmony of nature, enacting the inevitable. You might have decided that a purging is due, and so you set out against corruption using nature's chosen implement.

What prompted your interest in fire's natural role? Do your actions emphasize the positive or negative side of that role?

The Spiritualist: Fire offers you a more significant illumination than mere light. The glow and heat are useful, but you see fire as a token of deeper things. Each flame is the touch of something greater and truer—a thing worthy of devotion. You go where it leads, fight what it wills, and seek in all things to learn from the wisdom it represents.

As a spiritualist, you might seem chaotic at times—as ungraspable as the flames you emulate. Other times you might pursue one goal unshakably and inexorably as the great fires that destroy forests and cities. The single unifying characteristic is that fire is always an end for you, never a means or a tool. You might spend hours staring into flame, give cryptic advice about fire's nature, and consult it during battle. Alternatively, you might view it as an idea more than a force and pursue an ideal more than an entity.

How long have you followed the ways of fire? Was there a significant event that started you on that path? What mission or task has fire given you?

Example Pyromancer: Tuhn, Spark of the Burning Omen

All things rise and fall, like the breathing of destiny. When something falls, the flames purify it for its eventual rise. Without them, it would languish and decay, sinking into accumulated waste and finally into oblivion. The flames are the surest harbinger of hope, whether it is for a field, a town, or a civilization.

Tuhn witnessed this firsthand during the destruction and subsequent revitalization of Erador. The city once symbolized decadence and depravity, but after its near destruction in an apocalypse of fire, it arose as a beacon of justice and liberty. Fire wrought that change, and it effected similar change in Tuhn.

He traveled extensively, watching, learning, and reinforcing his new convictions. Eventually he apprenticed himself to Tafyr, a phoelarch mystic in service to the primordial Kossuth. That great being became his noble ideal, and Tuhn learned much about it while at Tafyr's side.

Now the period of his tutelage is over, and he has set out into the world as an agent of change. He has recognized the corruption despoiling the heart of the people, and he wields the fire to answer it. The corrupt will perish. To all others he offers the choice essential to the flame: be renewed or be consumed.

Wizard Powers

The following wizard powers focus on fire, providing your character with multiple ways to utilize fiery effects within the game.

Level 1 At-Will Spell

Erupting Flare — Wizard Attack 1

You kindle a massive, sudden flame within your enemy. The fires burn your foe and spill out to singe any who stay near it.

At-Will ✦ Arcane, Fire, Implement
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One creature
Attack: Intelligence vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d10 + Intelligence modifier fire damage, and any creature that ends its turn adjacent to the target before the end of the target's next turn takes fire damage equal to your Intelligence modifier.
Level 21: 2d8 + Intelligence modifier fire damage.

Level 7 Attack Spell

Fire Sea Travel — Wizard Attack 7

After your fiery attack, you open a window into the Fire Sea and skip through it to a nearby location.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Fire, Implement, Teleportation
Standard Action **Close** burst 1
Target: Each creature in burst
Attack: Intelligence vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + Intelligence modifier fire damage, and the target cannot see anything farther than 3 squares from it until the end of your next turn.
Effect: You teleport 5 squares.

Level 10 Utility Spell

Phoenix Step — Wizard Utility 10

You vanish in a sudden flare of flame, only to rise from the ashes elsewhere.

Encounter ✦ Arcane
Free Action **Personal**
Trigger: You take fire damage
Effect: Reduce the triggering fire damage to 0 and remove yourself from play until the start of your next turn. When you return to play, you reappear in any space within 10 squares of the square you left and within line of sight to that square.

Level 13 Attack Spell

Wake of Fire — Wizard Attack 13

A wave of fire streaks outward along the ground from your hand, rising up to consume what enemies you chose.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Fire, Implement
Standard Action **Close** blast 2
Primary Target: One creature in blast
Primary Attack: Intelligence vs. Reflex. This attack ignores cover and superior cover.
Hit: 2d6 + Intelligence modifier fire damage.
Effect: Make a secondary attack using the primary target as the origin square.
Secondary Target: One creature in blast not the primary target
Secondary Attack: Intelligence vs. Reflex. This attack ignores cover and superior cover.
Hit: 2d6 + Intelligence modifier fire damage.
Effect: Make a tertiary attack using the secondary target as the origin square.
Tertiary Target: One creature in blast not the primary or secondary target
Tertiary Attack: Intelligence vs. Reflex. This attack ignores cover and superior cover.
Hit: 2d6 + Intelligence modifier fire damage.

Level 15 Daily Spell

Serpents of Flame — Wizard Attack 15

Your arms become twin serpents of pure flame with which you harry your enemies.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Fire, Implement, Polymorph
Standard Action **Melee** 2
Target: One or two creatures
Attack: Intelligence vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d6 + Intelligence modifier fire damage, and you slide the target 1 square.
Effect: You transform your arms into fiery serpents until the end of your next turn. While this effect lasts, you can make the following secondary attack:
Opportunity Action **Melee** 2
Trigger: An enemy leaves a square within 2 squares of you without shifting
Secondary Target: The triggering enemy
Secondary Attack: Intelligence vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + Intelligence modifier fire damage, and you can slide the target 1 square.
Sustain Minor: The effect persists until the end of your next turn.
Sustain Standard: The effect persists until the end of your next turn and you can repeat this power's attacks.

Level 16 Utility Spell

Flame's Protection — Wizard Utility 16

You summon flashing wreaths of fire to buffer your allies from heat and cold, and woe to the careless enemy who tries to pierce that protection.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Fire
Minor Action **Close** burst 5
Target: You and one or two allies in burst
Effect: The target gains resist 10 cold and resist 10 fire until the end of your next turn. Whenever a creature makes a melee attack against the target, the attacker takes 15 fire damage. No creature can take this damage more than once per turn.

Level 19 Daily Spell

Feast of Destruction — Wizard Attack 19

Few forces can match the awesome appetite of fire; you release it to feed.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Fire, Implement, Zone
Standard Action **Area** burst 2 within 20
Target: Each creature in burst
Attack: Intelligence vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8 + Intelligence modifier fire damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends).
Miss: Half damage and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).
Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of your next turn. Any creature that enters the zone or ends its turn there takes 5 fire damage. Creatures cannot make saving throws against ongoing fire damage while within the zone.
Sustain Minor: The zone persists until the end of your next turn.
Sustain Standard: The zone persists until the end of your next turn, and you make the following secondary attack.
Secondary Target: Each creature in zone
Secondary Attack: Intelligence vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8 + Intelligence modifier fire damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Level 22 Daily Spell

Fire Sigil — Wizard Utility 22

With the fire at your fingertips, you trace an ancient design onto the ground at your feet, then channel your power through it to magnificent effect.

Daily ✦ Arcane
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: Until the end of the encounter or until you leave your square, you gain the following benefits: When making an arcane fire attack, you gain a +2 power bonus to attack rolls and a power bonus to damage rolls equal to your Intelligence modifier. You also gain a bonus to Arcana checks equal to your Intelligence modifier.

Level 23 Attack Spell

Flaming Rebuke — Wizard Attack 23

You seize the energy of your foe's failed attack and use it to launch a fiery rebuttal.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Fire, Implement
Immediate Reaction **Ranged** 20
Trigger: An enemy misses you with an attack
Target: The triggering enemy
Attack: Intelligence vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8 + Intelligence modifier fire damage. If the triggering attack was a fire attack, the target is also stunned until the end of your next turn.

NEW FEATS

Adding an element of control to working with fire, which constantly fights those seeking to be in command of it, can make a fire-using wizard a stronger force in combat. The following feats help provide wizards with the ability to make the most of fire.

Heroic Tier Feats

The following feats are suitable for any character who meets the prerequisite.

Burn Everything

Prerequisite: Wizard

Benefit: Your arcane fire powers ignore an amount of fire resistance equal to your Intelligence modifier. The fire resistance you ignore increases to 5 + your Intelligence modifier at 11th level and to 10 + your Intelligence modifier at 21st level. If the creature is immune to fire, instead treat that creature as having resist fire 25.

Stoking the Fire

Prerequisite: Wizard

Benefit: When you hit a target with a fire attack, you gain a +2 power bonus to your next damage roll with a fire attack against that target before the end of your next turn.

Sympathy of Flame

Prerequisite: Wizard

Benefit: You gain a +2 feat bonus to damage rolls with arcane fire attacks against creatures taking ongoing fire damage. This bonus increases to +4 at 11th level and +6 at 21st level.

Paragon Tier Feat

The feat in this section is available to any characters of 11th level and above who meet the prerequisites.

Consuming the Weak

Prerequisite: 11th level, wizard

Benefit: Whenever you hit a target vulnerable to fire with an arcane fire attack, the target takes ongoing 5 fire damage in addition to the attack's normal effects (save ends).

New Paragon Path: Master of Flame

"The unquenchable hunger, the unrestrained passion, the merciless destroyer. Fire serves me; be wary."

Prerequisite: Any arcane class

The history of pyromancy parallels the history of all magic among the mortal races. As soon as they first dabbled in the arcane, primitive wizards sought to apply that power to one of the most intimidating and important natural forces of their experience: fire. They learned rudimentary spellcraft under the difficult tutelage of flame, and their experiments became the foundation for almost every subsequent study.

Ironically, pyromancy's lessened popularity indicates its importance. It remains so fundamental that many wizards take it for granted, relegating it to their perceived inferiors. Common presumptions reveal the truth, however: Tales of wizardry nearly always include at least one fireball.

As a Master of Flame, you embrace this ancient discipline without regard for anyone's disdain. You will show them true mastery of magic as you devastate opponents with the force they overlook.

Master of Flame Path Features

Combustive Action (11th level): When you spend an action point to take an extra action, you deal fire damage equal to your level to each enemy adjacent to you.

Critical Conflagration (11th level): Whenever you score a critical hit with an arcane fire attack, one creature you hit with the attack takes ongoing fire damage equal to twice your Intelligence modifier (save ends).

Swath of Destruction (16th level): When you use an arcane fire burst or blast attack, you can increase the size of the burst or blast by 1.

Master of Flame Spells

Fanning the Flames — Master of Flame Attack 11

As flames envelop one of your enemies, you cause the flames to swell and spread to another.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Fire, Implement
Standard Action — **Ranged** 10
Target: One creature taking ongoing fire damage
Attack: Intelligence vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d8 + Intelligence modifier fire damage, and any ongoing fire damage the target is taking increases by 5.
Effect: Make a secondary attack in an area burst 1 centered on the primary target.
Secondary Target: Each creature in burst
Secondary Attack: Intelligence vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8 + Intelligence modifier fire damage.

Burning Transformation — Master of Flame Utility 12

You become a creature of pure flame.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Fire, Polymorph
Minor Action — **Personal**
Effect: You transform into a creature of fire until the end of the encounter. While in this form you gain the following benefits and limitations: You are insubstantial, you can shift 1 square as a minor action, you are immune to fire, you gain a +5 power bonus to damage rolls with arcane fire attacks, and you cannot use any attack power without the fire keyword. Additionally, whenever an enemy hits you with a melee attack, it takes fire damage equal to 5 + your Intelligence modifier.

Furious Immolation — Master of Flame Attack 20

You summon a titanic column of flame that draws everything nearby toward destruction.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Fire, Implement, Zone
Standard Action — **Area** burst 2 within 10
Target: Each creature in burst
Attack: Intelligence vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d6 + Intelligence modifier fire damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of your next turn. Any creature that enters the zone or starts its turn there takes 15 fire damage. Make a secondary attack as an area burst 4 with the same origin square.
Secondary Target: Each creature in burst
Secondary Attack: Intelligence vs. Fortitude
Hit: You pull the target 2 squares toward the attack's origin square.
Sustain Minor: The zone persists until the end of your next turn, and you repeat the secondary attack.

About the Author

This is Daniel Jones's third article for Dragon® magazine. Now he has a loving and beautiful wife, they're expecting their first child, and he's written for the Dungeons & Dragons® game. Dreams do come true.

Bloodlines of Arkhosia: Dragonfear

By Peter Schaefer

Illustration by Tyler Jacobson

None question whether the dragonborn are related to dragons. The scales, the brute strength, and the force of personality make the relationship clear to most people. Additionally, the breath weapon is the race's ultimate expression of its close kinship with the dragons and the draconic gods.

That connection is a point of pride for most dragonborn, which makes it difficult for them to accept when a dragonborn child fails to develop a breath weapon. Such children make their parents nervous, because the parents fear a thinning of the draconic bloodline that means so much to their honor. Other parents become distant when another's child has no breath weapon, careful of the loss of face that would stem from close association with such children, and of the chance that one of their children might develop a friendship—or worse, a romance—with the scion of a fading bloodline. Also, such children scare their peers, in part because children learn their habits from their elders, but primarily because other children are honest enough to admit and react to the fear that such children evoke in them.

Dragonborn with no breath weapon manifest their draconic heritage in a different form from most. Instead of a breath weapon, they carry with them the dragonfear. They evoke in others a sense of raw, savage power that sets hairs on edge and forces them to the brink of panic. And when these dragonborn rage, people fumble and try to get away.

A dragonborn of this heritage rarely remains in the dragonborn community of his or her birth—or, for that matter, in any community—for long. He or she can fit in among other dragonborn only until called on to use a breath weapon. Even other communities find a dragonborn with this heritage unnerving. Eventually, the dragonborn learns to quiet his or her aura of fear, but it still leaks out during times of great stress.

When you create a dragonborn character, you can choose to take the Dragonfear racial trait in place of the Dragon Breath racial trait.

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New Racial Trait

Dragonfear: You are naturally intimidating at the best of times, and when passions strike, you are positively terrifying. You gain the *dragonfear* racial power.

Dragonfear — **Dragonborn Racial Power**

Your presence causes your enemies to quake and tremble.

Encounter ✦ Fear
Minor Action **Close** burst 5 (increase to close burst 10 at 21st level)
Target: Each enemy in burst
Attack: Strength +2 or Charisma +2 vs. Will. Increase to 4 at 11th level and 6 at 21st level.
Hit: The target takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls and grants combat advantage until the end of your next turn.

Dragonborn Adventurers

Three sample dragonborn adventurers are described below.

Mirakh was chosen at a young age to learn the art of the sorcerer. She credits her unsettling presence with this honor, and she refuses to let anyone speak ill of her difference from most dragonborn. She is fiercely defensive of her pride, especially to the other dragonborn she lived among until recently. When a squad of hobgoblins murdered her mentor, the one dragonborn who never treated her differently, she gathered a team of heroes and set out to end the hobgoblin menace for all time.

The dragonborn rogue **Odrikon** has made a name for himself. He always hated secrets—secrets kept from him, anyway—and as his skills at breaking and entering and stealth grew, he made it his profession to liberate secrets. He makes good money liberating them to select persons. And when he can't steal information that's written down, he steals the person who has it in memory. He's good at scaring the truth out of them. He and his allies are waging a secret war against cultists of Vecna, but it can't be long before they are noticed and retribution comes his way.

Radaksis is a dragonborn paladin of Bahamut who remains an enigma even to herself. Her scales are a unique iron-and-rust combination and, though she is fully grown and well trained, her first memory is of standing in what she calls her home village only two years ago. She knows her life is dedicated to the Platinum Dragon, and she strives to live up to his standards. After discovering the frosty reception her lack of a breath weapon drew from other dragonborn, she took up with a company of other divine heroes doing good in the names of their gods. She has much in common with them, and she hopes Bahamut will reward her service with knowledge of her past.

New Feats

Dragonborn with the *dragonfear* racial power can make great use of the following feats.

Heroic Tier Feats

The following feats are suitable for any character who meets the prerequisites.

Blood of Dragons

Prerequisite: Dragonborn, *dragonfear* racial power

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus to all defenses against fear attacks, or a +4 if the attacker is a dragon.

Draconic Guardian

Prerequisite: Dragonborn, *dragonfear* racial power

Benefit: When you hit a creature with *dragonfear*, you can mark it until the end of your next turn.

Intimidation of the Dragon

Prerequisite: Dragonborn, *dragonfear* racial power, trained in Intimidate

Benefit: You gain a +4 feat bonus to Intimidate checks.

Paragon Tier Feats

Any feat in the following section is available to a character of 11th level or higher who meets the prerequisites.

Dragon's Rejuvenation

Prerequisite: 11th level, dragonborn, *dragonfear* racial power

Benefit: When you take your second wind, you regain use of *dragonfear* if you have expended it in this encounter.

Dragon's Terror

Prerequisite: 11th level, dragonborn, *dragonfear* racial power

Benefit: One creature you hit with *dragonfear* is also dazed until the end of your next turn.

Paragon Path: Fear Walker

"You have a reason to be afraid."

Prerequisite: Dragonborn, *dragonfear* racial power

The ability to affect others with supernatural draconic fear changes the way a dragonborn sees the world. Dragonborn are already proud, and seeing other creatures flinch and cringe before him or her only swells that pride. Pleased by others' reactions, they learn how to focus the dragonfear they wield. They hone it into a weapon and force enemies to their knees, tears streaming from their faces in terror. It is an exhilarating feeling that the best fear walkers learn to control.

Your mastery of others' fear is still growing, but it is already formidable. When you choose, you make enemies grovel at your feet, and you've found few you cannot make fear for their lives with choice words and a threatening stance. Soon, you will achieve the same skill with this ability that the dragons themselves wield.

Fear Walker Path Features

Fear Mastery (11th level): You gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls with fear powers.

Fear Walker's Action (11th level): When you spend an action point, one creature you can see cannot attack you until the end of your next turn or until you attack it. Creatures immune to fear are immune to this effect.

Understanding of Fear (11th level): You gain a +2 bonus to Insight and Intimidate checks, and you are immune to *frightful presence*.

Walking with Terror (16th level): You gain a +2 power bonus to attack rolls with fear powers against targets adjacent to you.

Fear Walker Powers

Wave of Terror — Fear Walker Attack 11

Your foes hold you in such fear that it forces them to their knees.

Encounter ✦ Fear, Psychic
Standard Action **Close** burst 2
Target: Each enemy in burst
Attack: Strength +6 or Charisma +6 vs. Will
Level 21: Strength +9 or Charisma +9 vs. Will
Hit: 2d8 + Strength or Charisma modifier psychic damage, and the target falls prone. Until the end of your next turn, if you are next to the target, it cannot stand.

Aura of Fear — Fear Walker Utility 12

You radiate fear that causes your enemies to flinch away from you.

Daily ✦ Fear, Psychic, Stance
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Until the stance ends, when a nonminion enemy starts its turn within 2 squares of you, it must end its turn farther from you or take 10 psychic damage.

Dragonfear Overwhelming — Fear Walker Attack 20

You force your presence into your enemies' minds, making them unable to think of anything but the terror they have of you.

Daily ✦ Fear
Standard Action **Close** burst 10
Target: One, two, or three enemies in burst
Attack: Strength +9 or Charisma +9 vs. Will
Hit: The target is stunned (save ends).
Aftereffect: The target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends).

About the Author

Peter Schaefer holds the world records for simultaneous paper cuts, fastest reenactment of James Garfields' assassination, most consecutive recitations of Augustus Gloop's punishment song from *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and longest attempted juggle. It is these experiences that give him the mental fortitude necessary to succeed as an RPG developer, working on such projects as *Adventurer's Vault 2*, *Divine Power*, and many D&D Insider articles, in the pursuit of his next world record. He won't spoil the surprise, but it involves lots and lots of dice.

Winning Races: Wilden

By Bruce R. Cordell
Illustration by Tyler Jacobson

Bark and branch, leaf and root: behold an avatar of nature given mind and form, purpose and power, to eradicate that which threatens to spoil life's balance.

You are a wilden. You think, feel, act, and move like any other creature. Yet sap, not blood, flows through your body, and your flesh is more akin to supple wood than skin. But if you are cut, you bleed. If you are cut down, you die. And like any other intelligent creature, you yearn to be accepted and part of a community of friends and good-willed companions.

Like a half-remembered dream, green inklings lie deep inside you. Normally they remain quiescent, but when danger threatens, these ideas rush over you, becoming full-fledged manifestations of nature. Sometimes you embody nature's guile, sometimes its changeable fury, and sometimes its implacable memory.

Regardless of your manifestation, you return to yourself and put aside your manifestations for a time—until danger threatens again. During these periods, you are a creature living its life in accord with the boundaries of the natural world.

You do not hail from a wilden country or city because no such thing exists; you call home where you lie down to rest, but you are only completely comfortable in settings with natural light or growth. When you stay in noisy and bright humanoid cities, you prefer rooms that have ground floor patios so you can rest on the earth, or at least windows that open onto the night so natural breezes can brush you and remind you of the wider world.

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Additional Wilden Backgrounds

Though you do not fully embody each of these aspects, they are part of you and continue to underlie your being and affect your personality. In fact, your background might be influenced by which wilden racial power you prefer.

Ancient One: The more you manifest Aspect of the Ancients, the more ancient secrets of the world ago whisper to you. Ancient sites, old gods, and primeval events seem more familiar. Heroes and villains of yore dance in your visions, and you might find that quests which long ago went unfulfilled seem once again important to you. You could learn of a place long left unprotected that requires a new defender, and that steward might be you. The myth of your own race's creation ("The Seedling Myth") plays through your dreams, and you wonder if it holds truth. It doesn't matter; the myth resonates with your heartwood.

Associated Skills: History, Nature

Destroyer: The destroyer is nature's fury incarnate—the destruction embodied by hurricanes, tornadoes, and lightning strikes. You see yourself as just such a force of nature, prowling across the world and visiting your fury and rightful wrath on those who deserve it and perhaps even sometimes on those who do not. No one can say which way it might go because you are like a living, breathing natural disaster.

Associated Skills: Intimidate, Stealth

Hunter: You seek out specific threats to the natural order, and when you find them, you eliminate them. Finding the threat can be a long and arduous hunt, but you enjoy the chase and savor spending long periods of time tailing your chosen prey. Though any creature can choose to give up its place within nature's hierarchy and become your quarry, aberrations are immediately and always on your list of creatures to hunt down and kill.

Associated Skills: Dungeoneering, Stealth

The Seedling Myth

The first wildens sprouted spontaneously from a confluence of growing things, spiritual energy, and a Feywild grove devastated by greed.

Before it was cleared and its boughs fed to a great bonfire, the grove was home to foxes, voles, fireflies, sprites, and all manner of quiet, scurrying things. The grove was also where the tree called Dancer grew.

Eladrin visited Dancer once each season to watch the sway of its branches in the midnight winds off the Sea of Serenity. They learned insights and secrets in those gentle movements. They saw beauty, grace, and power in the waving branches and shimmering leaves. They came away at peace, rejuvenated by Dancer's wordless grace.

The world darkened a little when Starngatha the hag learned of Dancer.

Starngatha wondered how a mere tree could be the inheritor of wisdom of the sort attributed to Dancer. Unable to imagine anything beyond her own narrow mind, the hag guessed Dancer was a fraud.

Starngatha supposed that behind its woody façade, Dancer was an accursed oracle, forever bound to one place. Or, she mused, perhaps Dancer *was* a tree, but grown from a seedling taken from a divine grove.

Or better yet, perhaps Dancer was grown from a cutting taken from one of the ancient Forest Monarchs, the four titan trees as tall as mountains that shadowed the realm while gods and primordials still warred. After all, Dancer was a yew, and perhaps it was a scion of the Silver Yew, which was fabled for the songs the wind once played in its leaves.

Whether Dancer was any of the things the hag supposed, the tree's lineage couldn't save it when Starngatha came to the grove.

The hag hewed every tree but Dancer and fed it to a mighty fire, chanting all the while as she gathered up her power. As the last of Dancer's siblings burned up, the hag turned her attention to the remaining yew tree.

She called for the power of Dancer to show itself, and not in the swaying of branches or the sound of wind whispering through leaves. No, Starngatha didn't have the patience for the tree to let its wisdom flow into her as the eladrin and other visitors had once done. She wanted to rip the knowledge complete from Dancer's woody limbs and know it all in an instant.

None of the imprecations and threats Starngatha screamed had any effect on Dancer. Even cutting off choice branches and feeding them to the fire didn't startle the tree into any sort of action, except for perhaps the tiniest of shivers. The hag finally flew into a rage at the tree's mute indifference and hewed it to the earth as she'd done with every other growing thing in the grove.

Dancer's three seedlings quickened in that moment, called in equal parts by Starngatha's magic, her senseless desecration of the grove, and

the outrage and fear of the fleeing fey creatures that rippled away from where Dancer's lonely stump remained.

The seedlings swelled and transformed, and from them were birthed three fully conscious individuals: three wilden, the very first of a new race.

One seedling had eyes and leaves of white; this one recalled a hint of Dancer's guile.

Jagged spurs protruded from the skin of another, and its eyes were black; this wilden embodied the wrath of the grove over Starngatha's senseless destruction.

The final wilden was hardest to see, because its body was camouflaged with woodland patterns and its eyes were green. It possessed a yearning to hunt down all desecrators, beginning with the hag.

"Do you finally come to do my bidding and answer my questions?" the hag asked.

"Nay," said the guileful wilden. "We have a different purpose. Can you guess it?"

The wrathful wilden picked up the axe the hag had thoughtlessly tossed aside. It said, "You need not guess; we are here to end you."

The hunter wilden called after the fleeing hag, "We will find you, wherever you run."

In that, the hunter wilden spoke true. Starngatha's head was found mounted on Dancer's stump the next day.

Wilden Feats

Wilden are learning new ways to safeguard the natural order and punish those who despoil it.

Heroic Tier Feats

The following feats are suitable for any character who meets the prerequisites.

Gift of the Trees

Prerequisite: Wilden, Nature's Aspect racial trait

Benefit: When you use a wilden racial power, one ally within 10 squares of you can shift 1 square as a free action.

Wilden Adaptability

Prerequisite: Wilden, Nature's Aspect racial trait

Benefit: When you use a wilden racial power, you can ignore difficult terrain until the end of your next turn when you shift.

Paragon Tier Feats

Feats in this section are available to any characters of 11th level and above who meet the prerequisites.

Briar Thorns

Prerequisite: 11th level, wilden

Benefit: Whenever you deal ongoing damage to an enemy, the enemy is slowed until that damage ends.

Clinging Vines

Prerequisite: 11th level, wilden

Benefit: You gain a climb speed equal to your speed.

Treeborn

The power and majesty of an unbending forest tree combined with the quickness and mobility of living creature flow through you; you are a treeborn.

Prerequisite: Wilden

You dream of leaves shining in the sun, giving you the strength of ten. You dream of roots burrowing into the earth, providing unyielding support. You dream of towering over your foes as tree looks down on undergrowth. Then you open your eyes and smile, because it is no dream.

You have embraced your origins and have learned the trick of manifesting a strength few others can hope to match, either in raw power or in size. You reach for this strength as a guardian of living things everywhere, be they plants or animals, as well as humanoids who've learned to live in harmony with nature.

For those who can't learn coexistence, you have nothing but disdain. If their crimes are severe enough, you act swiftly, showing the enemies of life the error of their ways.

When combat beckons, your height begins to increase. Like a stem seeking the sun, your torso and limbs lengthen as the battle rages, and they reach farther and farther until you can manipulate your foes as if you were a much larger creature.

Treeborn Path Features

Reaching for the Canopy (11th level): When you use a wilden racial power, increase your reach with melee attacks by 1 until the end of your next turn.

Reaching Limbs Action (11th level): When you spend an action point to take an extra action that includes a melee attack and you hit with that attack, you can slide the target 4 squares.

Treeborn Action (16th level): You can score critical hits on a roll of 19–20 with melee attacks against creatures granting combat advantage to you.

Treeborn Powers

Lashing Branches — Treeborn Attack 11

Your moves emulate those of a storm-tossed tree, but they have deadly purpose. You can attack more than a single foe with one attack.

Encounter ✦ Weapon
Standard Action — **Melee weapon**
Target: One or two creatures
Attack: Highest ability vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + highest ability modifier, and you can slide the target a number of squares equal to your Wisdom modifier.

Root Sense — Treeborn Utility 12

You gain a better vantage on your foes from your increased height above the field of combat as well as through the tiny rootlets you send into the ground around you.

Encounter
Minor Action — **Personal**
Effect: You ignore penalties for cover (but not superior cover), concealment, and total concealment. You can attack an invisible target as if it wasn't invisible. This benefit lasts until you successfully deal damage to a creature that enjoys one of the protections noted or until the end of the encounter.

Walking Sentinel — Treeborn Attack 20

You briefly swell in height to the size of a forest ash. You stride through your enemies and rain blows down upon them.

Daily ✦ Weapon
Standard Action — **Close** burst 2
Effect: Before the attack, shift 4 squares. You can move through an enemy's space during the shift.
Target: Each creature in burst
Attack: Highest ability vs. AC
Hit: 4[W] + highest ability modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.

About the Author

Bruce R. Cordell is an Origins and ENnie award-winning game designer whose long list of professional credits includes the new *Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide*™, *Keep on the Shadowfell*™, *Draconomicon I: Chromatic Dragons*™ and *Open Grave: Secrets of the Undead*™. Bruce is also an author of Forgotten Realms novels, including *Plague of Spells*, first book in the new Abolethic Sovereignty series.

Channel Divinity: Tymora's Luck

By Erik Scott de Bie and Matt Sernett

Illustration by Ryan Pancost

Fortune infamously favors the bold—or else buries them under a wave of destruction. One can never be certain what fate holds. For this reason, warriors and merchants, nobles and commoners alike pray for favor from Tymora, hoping that she might smile upon them and guide their paths.

Also called the Bright Smiling Lady, Tymora (tie-MOR-ah) is the goddess of luck and the favored patron of adventurers. A deity's influence is determined by how many mortals pray to her, and few exhortations are more common—particularly when one is fighting for one's life—than those to good fortune. Since nearly everyone in the Realms has supplicated the Bright Lady at least once, this makes Tymora a powerful goddess indeed.

History and Alliances

Tymora is half of the original goddess of luck, Tyche (TI-kee), who fell victim to a legendary event called the Dawn Cataclysm. It was triggered by her once lover, Lathander the Morninglord, god of the dawn and new creation, who was a younger incarnation of Amaunator. Lathander sought to redesign the Realms pantheon in his own image, including Tyche. In her boldness, Tyche plucked a particular flower she believed to have been created by Lathander for precisely this purpose and thrust it into her hair. In truth, the flower was an avatar of Moander, then god of rot and corruption. It quickly insinuated itself into the goddess of fortune, twisting her to horrible evil. When the full extent of Moander's damage was revealed, the goddess Selûne struck Tyche with a bolt of divine light, thereby fracturing her essence. Tyche split into two goddesses, Tymora and Beshaba. The twin goddesses have battled each other ever since.

Tymora is nearly as notorious as Sune (the winsome goddess of love) for her antics over the centuries, though she is notably more adventurous and less serious than any of her fellow deities. She has been linked romantically and dogmatically to numerous deities, though in every event Tymora has viewed such liaisons as mere game and jest rather than serious alliance. Most of the Good and unaligned deities of the pantheon view her activities with appreciation, because she brings an important light side to the darkening Realms. Tymora remains jovial even when making war against her dark sister, preferring mischief and ironic justice to open violence.

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More than any other deity, Tymora is likely to chart the course of adventurers, even those from humble beginnings. She has been known to bless up-and-coming heroes by tweaking fate ever so slightly here and there to allow them to gain the sort of power they need for a great destiny. Such heroes inevitably incur the lasting wrath of Beshaba and her priesthood.

Beloved of Fortune

One of the ways in which Tymora and Beshaba's feud has manifested over the last century has been in competition for an influx of new worshippers who turned their backs on other luck deities which either perished or lost power in the Spellplague. Perhaps the most infamous struggle was over the same turncoat high priest—a sun elf bard known as Lilten—who once served Erevan Ilesere (the elven god of luck and trickery). Each attempted to woo Lilten by turns, seeking to place him at the head of their respective priesthoods. Beshaba ultimately won his affections, and he served as a double-agent for her against Tymora's priesthood. (It is unclear, however, whether he is a triple agent serving Tymora's interests all along.) Cloaked in illusion, Lilten roves the land, engaging in all manner of complex and whimsical schemes to further the power of luck and trickery.

Tymora's Priesthood

Tymorans are born with a love of testing their luck (some call it a death wish). They take ridiculous risks, which they see as an opportunity to prove their love and trust in the goddess. This is not to suggest that they are foolish or suicidal, only that given the choice between a practical, tried-and-true solution and a glorious charge with a much slimmer margin for error, the choice is obvious.

This philosophy particularly applies to the so-called Testers, a radical band of Tymoran priests and priestesses who are notorious for taking ridiculous risks in the name of spreading the glory of their goddess. (Fellow Tymorans are always on hand to heal or raise members of this band of maniacs.)

Many priests of Tymora travel far and wide, ministering to the hurt and protecting the helpless. In their spare time, they adventure for the coin and the thrill of danger. They counsel the seemingly unlucky in love, business, or governance, trying to help others see the spark of luck in themselves. Some take such counsel to the next level and offer not just advice but commands, so as to determine the day-to-day affairs of everyone they can.

Such manipulative Tymorans belong to a sect of the heretical faith called the Fatemakers, which espouses two core philosophies: that all luck deities are one and the same (so you'll have priests of Tymora, Beshaba, Erevan, and so on, all coming together to serve a common goal) and that mortals can influence fate/luck in the same way as the gods—and given enough power, can become their own gods. Mainstream Tymorans despise the Fatemakers, suspecting (rightly) that many of them are corrupt and secret adherents to Beshaba.

Tymoran Adventurers

Heroes sworn to Tymora come in all races and classes, but they share two important traits in common: They rely more on their wits than their brawn, and peril finds them with uncanny accuracy. Humans and halflings are the most common adherents of the faith, but Tymorans have a well-deserved reputation for welcoming the most exotic races and strangest backgrounds. Tymoran adventurers are well received in most communities but are expected to leave in short order, taking their troublesome reputations with them.

Lucky Backgrounds

These backgrounds are particularly appropriate to servants of Tymora, or they can be adapted to match any luck deity.

Two Sides of the Coin: You are a twin, yet yours was not a normal birth; you were brought into the world beneath an alignment of stars not seen since before the Spellplague. The first born arrived in the world bright, laughing, and smiling only moments after birth. The second twin came later—an unexpected arrival after birthing was thought finished. This twin looked coldly upon the world with dark eyes and silence. Since then, you and your twin have been opposites, each one a different side of the same coin.

Is one twin good and the other evil? How were you and your twin treated differently as you grew up? Were you brought up together or separated? Can the twins be judged by appearances or is the truth that the first born hides the darkness that the second born shows? Which twin were you? Do both your parents still live? Was your strange birth prophesied or an

accident of coincidence? Do you know where your twin is now?

Associated Skills: Bluff, Insight

Lucky Child: You were born when, by all rights, such a birth should have been impossible, making you either a blessing or a curse for your surprised parents. Since a young age, you have been told that you owe your existence to the forces of luck, and you have developed a keen understanding of how chance conspires to influence reality. Perhaps your parents were old, or maybe you were born despite a hex against your bloodline. Perhaps a prophecy predicted your death but, unlike all the others, you survived.

Why was your birth such a quirk of fate? Is there a purpose to your birth, or do you seem to beat the odds wherever you go? Has your origin led you to question the odds, or do you fear you've used up all your luck just by being born?

Associated Skills: Insight, Religion

FEATS

The following feats have an essence of luck to them, allowing those who wish to add a touch of Tymora, Beshaba, or another luck deity to their characters.

Heroic Tier Feats

The following feats are suitable for any character who meets the prerequisites.

Beshaba's Boon

Benefit: Each time an enemy fails a saving throw against an effect you imposed, you gain 5 temporary hit points.

Heroes Make Their Own Luck

Benefit: When you spend an action point to take an extra action, you gain a +1 bonus to all defenses until the start of your next turn.

Luck of Champions

Benefit: The first time you make a successful saving throw in an encounter, you gain a +2 bonus to all attack rolls, skill checks, and saving throws you make before the end of your next turn.

Tymora's Smile

Benefit: When you roll a natural 20 on an attack roll, skill check, or saving throw, you and one ally within 5 squares of you can make a saving throw.

Paragon Tier Feats

The feat in this section is available to a character of 11th level or higher who meets the prerequisites.

Luck of the Gods

Prerequisite: 11th level

Benefit: When you roll a natural 20 on an attack roll, skill check, or saving throw, remove all effects on you that a save can end.

About the Authors

Erik Scott de Bie lives in the Seattle area with his wife, two cats, and far too much gamer stuff. He is the author of several *Forgotten Realms* novels, including *Ghostwalker*, *Depths of Madness*, and his most recent release, *Downshadow*.

Matthew Sernett is a writer and game designer for Wizards of the Coast who splits his time between Dungeons & Dragons and Magic: The Gathering. Recent credits include *Player's Handbook Races: Tieflings*, *The Plane Above: Secrets of the Astral Sea*, and *Magic the Gathering: Zendikar*.

TOOLS OF TYMORA

Adherents of Lady Luck favor items such as luckblades, lucky charms, gambler's suits, and all manner of devices that enhance saving throws or allow a wielder to manipulate fate and chance. Also, they are particularly fond of the following treasures.

Blood of Tyche Level 15

This golden vial holds swirling liquid luck—and a deadly poison.

Potion 1,000 gp

Power (Consumable): Minor Action. Drink this potion and spend a healing surge. You do not regain hit points as normal. Instead, once before the end of the encounter, when you make a skill check, ability check, or saving throw, you can reroll the check or roll but must use the second result.

Symbol of Scorned Fate Level 5+

This symbol, shaped like a double-headed coin, lets you elude fate for a split second.

Lvl 5	+1	1,000 gp	Lvl 20	+4	125,000 gp
Lvl 10	+2	5,000 gp	Lvl 25	+5	625,000 gp
Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	Lvl 30	+6	3,125,000 gp

Implement (Holy Symbol)

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d8 radiant damage per plus

Power (Encounter): Free Action. *Trigger:* You fail your first saving throw against an effect. *Effect:* The effect against which you failed your saving throw does not affect you until the end of your next turn. If the effect changes or has an additional effect after you fail your first saving throw, the triggering saving throw does not count as the first failed saving throw.

Summer Madness

by Bill Slavicsek

This time out, I'm going to continue my sneak peek into the upcoming Dark Sun™ *Campaign Setting* with a section detailing arcane magic in the world of fire and sand. I've also got the first images of our new set of miniatures, *Lords of Madness*, to reveal. It's the start of the summer season, and that means all kinds of madness here in the halls of Wizards of the Coast. Let's get to it!

Dark Sun Encounters

A new season of the amazingly popular D&D Encounters program kicks off on June 9th at a retail location near you. This season is devoted to the Dark Sun *Campaign Setting*, and every Wednesday starting next week you can play using the new Dark Sun material up to two months before the release of the product. If you haven't tried out D&D Encounters yet, now is a great time to hop aboard. Check out the retail locator to find an Encounters program near you.

This Month's Releases

Just a reminder for those of you who don't keep on top of this kind of stuff, we have a great lineup of D&D products releasing this month. The extremely limited edition Orcus figure is available starting this month—if you can find one! The Spider Queen Lolth graces the cover of *Monster Manual 3*, which features a ton of new creatures set in a new, easier-to-use format. You can also find *Player Handbook Races: Tieflings* and *Desert of Athas Dungeon Tiles* in stores this month. Finally, slip over to the novels tab to see our latest fiction releases, including *Tyranny of Ghosts* and *Nocturne*. Check them out.

Lords of Madness

So, Peter Lee, designer/developer of all things miniature and dungeon tile-like, sent me a picture that I just have to share. Actually, just read Peter's note, at right . . .

. . . What Peter said! *Lords of Madness* is an all-new randomized Huge set of 60 figures. It releases later this summer, and Pete will be leaking other images as the date gets closer. The photo is on the next page.

Attached is a picture of *Lords of Madness* figures on tiles from the *Desert of Athas* tile set for your next Ampersand column.

The six figures are:

- Cloaker Ambusher
- Draegloth Abomination
- Nalfeshnee Tyrant
- Shardmind Dominator
- Spell Weaver
- Young Volcanic Dragon

All of these miniatures are also creatures found in *Monster Manual 3*.

Mentioning that this is the first set from an all new team of sculptors would be good—it makes the set stand out as something different, and I think people will find that to be interesting.

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We've Got Contests

We've been running all kinds of contests recently, including "Tell Us About Your Character" and "Pimp Your Store." And there's more on the way! Check out http://www.wizards.com/dnd/promotions.aspx often to see what's going on.

Dark Sun Sneak Peek

One of the things that sets the Dark Sun Campaign apart from other D&D settings is the interaction of magic with the world. Athas, the world of the Dark Sun Campaign, has suffered greatly from the use of raw arcane power, which has turned a once-lush world into a desert wasteland. I'll close with a section from the upcoming Dark Sun *Campaign Setting* that delves into the nature of arcane magic on Athas.

And that's it for this time out. Until next time, Keep Playing!

Bill

About the Author

Bill Slavicsek's gaming life was forever changed when he discovered Dungeons & Dragons® in 1976. He became a gaming professional in 1986 when he was hired by West End Games as an editor. He quickly added developer, designer, and creative manager to his resume, and his work helped shape the *Paranoia*, *Ghostbusters*, *Star Wars*, and *Torg* role-playing games. He even found some time during that period to do freelance work for D&D 1st Edition. In 1993, Bill joined the staff of TSR, Inc. as a designer/editor. He worked on a bunch of 2nd Edition material, including products for Core D&D, *Dark Sun*®, *Ravenloft*®, and *Planescape*®. In 1997, he was part of the TSR crowd that moved to Seattle to join Wizards of the Coast, and in that year he was promoted to R&D Director for D&D. In that position, Bill oversaw the creation of both the 3rd Edition and 4th Edition of the *D&D Roleplaying Game*. He was one of the driving forces behind the *D&D Insider* project, and he continues to oversee and lead the creative strategy and effort for Dungeons & Dragons.

Bill's enormous list of credits includes *Alternity*, *d20 Modern*, *d20 Star Wars*, *Pokemon Jr.*, *Eberron*® *Campaign Setting*, the *D&D For Dummies* books, and his monthly "Ampersand (&)" column for *Dragon*™ Magazine.

ARCANE MAGIC

On Athas, arcane magic draws on the vitality of plants, animals, and minor primal spirits. But if a practitioner draws too deeply, the life form fueling the spell might be damaged or destroyed. This act of destruction is called defiling. The greater the spell, the more widespread the damage is. Defiling is a major cause for the world's foul condition. Other power sources do not have this corrupting effect on the environment.

An Athasian spellcaster has a choice between defiling and preserving. Defiling is easy and intoxicating, but it destroys or damages the life from which a spell draws power. Preserving is difficult and requires care, and it avoids harming the world around the caster. When you begin as a spellcaster, you might dabble in both arts, or you could let your morals or needs dictate your choices. Eventually, your use or rejection of defiling defines you as a defiler or a preserver.

DEFILING AND PRESERVING

When you use any arcane power, you can choose to defile, destroying mundane plant life within at least 1 square of you. When you use a daily arcane attack power, the damage to the world extends out a number of squares equal to half the level of the power you use. This destruction does not normally affect creatures or terrain, though defiled squares might become defiled terrain (described in the DARK SUN *Creature Catalog*) at the Dungeon Master's discretion. You are considered to be preserving unless you choose to defile.

If you have at least one arcane daily attack power, you gain the *arcane defiling* power.

Arcane Defiling — **Arcane Feature**

You draw upon the vitality of nearby life to fuel your magic, heedless of the harm you cause to the land and your allies.

At-Will ✦ Arcane, Necrotic
Free Action — **Personal**
Trigger: You make an attack roll or a damage roll as part of an arcane daily attack power.
Effect: You can reroll the triggering roll but must use the second result. In addition, each ally (willing or unwilling) within 20 squares of you takes necrotic damage equal to half his or her healing surge value. This damage ignores immunities and cannot be reduced in any way.
Special: You can use this effect once for any arcane daily attack power you use, affecting any single attack roll or the damage roll for that power.

THE DEFILER'S PATH

The easiest and most expedient path to power is defiling. Characters can use *arcane defiling* to alter the outcome of their most powerful spells by ruthlessly drawing vitality from nearby life forms. Many defilers destroy their surroundings even when performing minor spells. They relish the rush of power and the intimidating effect.

Defiling transforms small plants and vital nutrients in the soil into ash. Larger plants blacken and become brittle, often dying days later. The residue of these destroyed life forms is inert, leaving defiled lands barren and scarred for decades. Creatures with whom a defiler shares a mental or an emotional connection, such as allies or slaves, are wracked with pain as a defiler draws power. The most powerful defilers can use the act of defiling as a weapon, harming those with whom they share no connection.

THE PRESERVER'S PATH

Preservers believe that preserving is its own reward, given the state of the world. Through discipline, a preserver draws arcane power carefully instead of tearing it from the environment. Thus, a preserver can use spells without harming plant life. After finishing a spell, a preserver returns any excess energy to the environment. The most committed preservers eventually give up the ability to defile.

DISGUISING ARCANE POWERS

Arcane magic is illegal and can attract hostility, so a spellcaster often needs to conceal its use. When you use an arcane power without using *arcane defiling*, you can disguise the magic as another type of power, such as primal or psionic. Most people can't distinguish between types of magic. The Dungeon Master might require a Bluff check to disguise arcane magic when it is performed in the presence of enemies familiar with psionic or arcane power, such as templars, defilers, or nobles. If a spellcaster is defiling, he or she cannot disguise the arcane magic because of the visible effect on the environment.

Canine Encounters

BY SHELLY MAZZANOBLE
illustrations by William O'Conner

Dungeon Masters Appreciation Month is right around the corner, and I wanted to do something Dungeon Master-ish. You know, the whole "paying my dues," seeing how the other half lives, reap adoration and high regard from my peers. And then it came to me! I'll learn how to write my own encounter!

(Remind me next year to just send flowers.)

There are three reasons outside of DM Appreciation Month that led to my curiosity about how adventure design works.

1. I've been playing in a lunchtime D&D Encounters game but can't for the life of me figure out how each encounter takes almost exactly an hour. We come out beaten and bloodied and almost TPK'd but always manage to escape (sometimes thanks to a sensitive DM) just before our 1:00 meetings start.
2. Quality time with New DM! He loves telling me what to do!
3. If I don't learn how to write an encounter, I'm going to use this space to psychoanalyze each and every Real Housewife of New York, which may be fun but probably not appropriate for *Dragon* Magazine.

New DM agreed to help me out with the tutorial. I think any chance he gets to show me how hard his job as Dungeon Master is, he'll take. He also seems to enjoy any opportunity to torture me when our roles are reversed. I told him he could play in my encounter when it was finished.

I showed up in the conference room with my dog-eared *Monster Manual 3*. "Where's your *Dungeon Master's Guide*?" he asked.

"I'm looking at him," I said. New DM had that thing memorized. I was hoping for the Cliff Notes version.

New DM sighed and flipped his copy of the DMG open to chapter 4, which is about—what else—writing and running encounters.

"Oh," I said. "Well, thanks! You've been a huge help!"

Fortunately, New DM likes talking about how to run a D&D game almost as much as running one.

"Okay," he began, "what are you trying to do here?"

New DM must be real busy, because I thought we covered what we were doing here.

"I want to build an encounter," I explained.

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"I know," he said, rolling his eyes like he did last Tuesday when I insisted Tabby was bending over to pick up a penny when that minion's arrow came at her. "What kind of encounter?"

"How about a good encounter?" I said, not sure of what my choices were. I didn't want it to suck. "And one that won't give me an ulcer trying to figure out how to run it." I still have anxiety dreams over the last one.

"Well, it's your encounter," he reminded me. "You're going to have some freedom to play around with it if you find it's sucking."

That's a relief, I thought. If it starts going off the rails, I can just drop the entire party in a pit and call it done.

I told New DM that ideally this encounter would be one appropriate for the Wyld Stallyns. No need to create new characters, and if something horrible should happen to them, we can always pretend it happened to their evil twins.

New DM explained that for a party of six 7th-level adventurers, I would need about that many monsters. Which was odd, considering that we always seem to fight at least twice that many in his games.

"One way to look at building it would be to include one monster for every player."

The chart in the DMG puts it in a different perspective by listing varying encounter XP targets depending on level and number of PCs.

"In your case," New DM said, "you've got about 1,800 XP to spend."

"Awesome!" I said. I felt like I was about to go shopping in the Wheel of Fortune store. *I'll take a fire giant lavamaster for 1,600, please!* "Let's just buy the biggest monster I can for 1,800 XP and call it good. There. Done."

"Not so fast," New DM said. "That would be a really boring encounter. You can spend your XP on traps, hazards, and skill challenges, too."

He showed me a chart in the DMG to calculate those kinds of things.

"Every encounter should be a free-standing adventure," he said. "You want to include as much for the players to do as you're comfortable running."

Again, I suggested just one monster . . . a big, slow, lazy monster.

"I can handle sitting back and subtracting a few hit points here and there," I said.

New DM tried another tactic in an effort to make me understand his point.

"Say you're having a dinner party for six of your closet friends and you have a budget of $100. Would you buy a gigantic ice cream cake and call it good?"

"For a dinner party, no. For myself on a Friday night? Always," I said.

But New DM has been a guest at my dinner parties on more than one occasion. He knows how I would spend it.

"I'd have 45 different appetizers, a giant pan of lasagna, and a crepe bar for dessert."

"All that plus a crepe bar?" New DM questioned. He's quite the entertainer himself. "That's pretty heavy."

"You're probably right," I agreed. "Maybe a grilled pound cake with macerated fruit."

"Lots of eggs in pound cake," he said. "Maybe just some grilled pineapple or peaches."

"Oh yes! With rum infused homemade whipped cream!"

"Sold!"

After a good 15-minute diversion, I had three new dessert recipes to try and clarity into New DM's thinking. It's all about a well-rounded menu—the starters, the main course and the sweet finale.

Another tactic he let me in on? Figure out your location or your villain and let one inform the other. All I know is that I wanted to pick a really cool, new monster from *Monster Manual 3*, so chances would be good that the Wyld Stallyns haven't fought it before and won't know what to expect.

"You need to know who your villain is," New DM explained. "Who are his allies? What is his goal?"

This was starting to sound a lot like my 9th grade creative writing class, which in a way, is exactly what it was.

I decided to go with one of the new catastrophic dragons. I mean, come on—it already sounds intimidating and bad-ass. I chose the Young Earthquake Dragon in honor of the story I just heard on NPR about the Seattle Fault.

"It's only like a mile below ground," I said. "Do you realize that a can of beans falling out of your pantry could set that thing off and we'd all be toast?"

"Breadcrumbs, more likely."

Maybe I could work that into my encounter somehow.

"Let's just stick to fantasy," New DM said.

My dragon was 9th level, which is apparently fine for 7th-level adventurers.

"You don't want to stray more than two levels in either direction," New DM explained. Too high and it's not a fair fight, too low and it's not enough of a challenge. "Pay attention to XP, not level."

Once I had my villain and a little information about his habit and habitats, New DM suggested I go back to the setting of my previous adventure—the one I ran my group through when I first tried my hand at dungeon mastering (with disastrous results, I reminded New DM.)

"Ah, you're an old hand at it now," he smiled.

I looked sheepishly down at my hands. Yeah, I could use a manicure, I guess.

The town of Charlesburg is near and dear to me but the thought of those puppy-loving peaceful dwellers facing any more unjust strife is hard to bear.

"You're already familiar with the setting," New DM said. "And the Wyld Stallyns have gained some notoriety. It wouldn't be weird for the townspeople to call upon them for help."

Personally, if I were in deep doo doo, I probably *wouldn't* call on the Wyld Stallyns, but it's sweet of New DM to say so. Situating this encounter in Charlesburg made sense. I already wrote much of the setting, and I could feel the story taking shape in my mind.

We return to Charlesburg—a once-peaceful town nestled high in the hills, surrounded by war-torn villages. All that changed when the animal-loving inhabitants were forced into battle by the mysterious, night-time vanishings of their beloved dogs. A ragtag team of adventurers were called upon to locate the mayor's two pitbulls, Paco and Peanut.

A bloody battle ensued on the grounds of the famed but deserted animal shelter, Howl Haunt. Paco and Peanut were returned to their owner, and all was right in the world. The adventurers even used part of their reward to rebuild Howl Haunt.

Now a thriving animal shelter once again, Howl Haunt enjoys a 100% success rate in placing dogs with their forever homes. No euthanizing ever! The town of Charlesburg believes in No Dog Left Behind. Things were perfect in Charlesburg until ...

"Wait a minute. I don't know if I can kill a dragon," I told New DM. "Dragons are animals too. I'll feel bad."

"Didn't a dragon kill your beloved barbarian minotaur?" New DM asked. "What was his stupid name?"

Man, Kevin can't catch a break. "Yes, but still. This is my dragon."

New DM sighed. "You wanted to kill a pig-farming NPC who was trying to help you because you didn't like his voice. But killing a dragon who is terrorizing your idealistic little town *and its canine inhabitants* is a no-no?"

"The heart wants what the heart wants."

But New DM did have a point, and you know how I hate to admit that. Once an akita attacked my darling albeit pugnacious old malamute and I was the only one there to stop it. I kicked the Akita right in the snout. I had to! I had no intention of letting my Char Char get hurt! The akita relented, but I still feel bad about kicking that psychotic dog in the head. This earthquake dragon is killing (nope, can't go there) dog-napping Charlesburg's pet population. It must be stopped.

"If you don't want them to kill your dragon," New DM said, "you have to give them a reason not to. Perhaps it turns into a beautiful princess as soon as it's bloodied."

"They would for sure attack the princess," I said. "I know I would."

"It could run away," New DM suggested. "Or negotiate."

Yeah, but that would involve roleplaying, and we all know I'm not the best negotiator. I guess I could just pretend this is a game of make-believe and no dragons were hurt in the process. Oh wait . . . what?

"What if the dragon is susceptible to tickling, and if the adventurers tickle him he laughs so hard he spits out puppies? Unharmed, of course."

New DM shook his head, then started mumbling things like *help me, please make it stop, I don't think we're in D&D anymore*.

When New DM recovered, he explained just one of the reasons why that was a terrible idea.

"Ever notice why character actions are never part of the read-aloud text?"

"Because no one listens to that stuff?"

The same way New DM doesn't listen to me. "You can't predict what your characters will do," he said. "If it's integral to the story, you need to give them a reason to believe the villain is susceptible to special actions."

That, or I could just make sure Bart plays in this encounter. He's the King of Special Actions, often going out of his way to do something acrobatic, anom-

alous, or downright asinine. Take today's game when we were fighting a pack of ravenous attack beasts and Bart asked if they were wearing collars.

"Yes. Big, sharp, spiky collars," New DM answered. "Why?"

"I'm going to grab one by the neck and toss him into Tabitha's *flaming sphere*."

"If you do that, you'll take damage from the sharp spikes on his collar," New DM said. "But be my guest."

"Or you could maybe hit him with your longsword," Marty suggested. "You know, because you're already bloodied and I'm out of healing and all."

Yes. Bart would absolutely try to tickle the dragon.

Next, what to serve with a badass dragon? To me it wouldn't be weird if, say, a green dragon and a red dragon were hanging out together, but according to New DM, that's as preposterous a pairing as Donald Trump and Rosie O'Donnell. (And really, why am I bothering with the *Monster Manual*. Let's see those two fight!)

"Your pairings need to make sense or the players will lose their sense of immersion," New DM said.

I think *some* players might, but the Wyld Stallyns would probably just shrug their shoulders and take aim. New DM reverts to the food analogies.

"You wouldn't serve mashed potatoes with lasagna, right?"

"Every day if I could." Those are two of my favorite foods. "But no, not to my friends. Starch on starch is a horrible *faux pas*."

I saw New DM's point, so we went through the *Monster Manual* to find more suitable companions.

Earthquake dragons are loners; they don't rely on allies for long. Probably shouldn't give him any taste-bud-tempting friends either. It's one thing to have high maintenance friends, but living in fear that they'll not only stab you in the back but roast you on a spit and eat you for dinner? That gives new meaning to the term frenemy.

Seeing as though this encounter would involve dogs, I suggested a couple of Ironstone Gargoyles. Convenient and affordable, too. I still had enough XP left to add a handful of minions and a trap. New DM was really gunning for that trap.

"The Earthquake Dragon causes earthquakes wherever it goes," he rationalized. "A little rubble covering a sinkhole in the floor? You got a trap door!"

"Sold for 240 XP," I said. I hope I remember where I put it, so my minions don't fall through. We threw in a chasm for good measure, and oh boy! Wait until you see what happens in there!

I'd love to tell you, but I'm much too busy gathering up Dungeon Tiles and minis. And maybe creating some special actions for my monsters to appease Bart. And possibly a skill challenge for Kierin. Maybe a puppy for Laura and a chocolate torte for Hilary—

Wait a minute. It's Dungeon Master Appreciation Month.

They can bring *me* a cake.

About the Author

Shelly Mazzanoble will be accepting gifts all year in honor of Dungeon Master Appreciation Month.

BY MIKE MEARLS

Listening to feedback requires a combination of keeping an open mind and filtering the signal from the noise. It's easy to take one email, forum post, or conversation at a convention as a call to change the game. Realistically, though, changes in direction based on feedback require three things:

- Consistency. If we see the same request for a change over and over again, that's a sign that change is due.
- Time. It helps if a call for change is consistent over time. That tells us that we're dealing with a real issue, not just a topic of the moment.
- Widespread. It's important that a call for change appears in a number of different venues and from different sources. D&D is a widespread game. We need to listen to many players, not just one group, to determine whether something needs to be changed.

After sifting through feedback from the first two *Monster Manuals*, we decided it was time to adjust our approach to how we present creatures. In *Monster Manual* 3, we've modified the format for monster entries to add more background and story material.

Below is a sample entry from *Monster Manual* 3, the skulk. When I did the initial design on the book, I used the skulk as the starting point for freelancers. The notes below explain the format and what role each section plays.

Keep in mind that the skulk text is the raw work before editing and development. There might be a few changes between it and the final product.

The new format really shines when it comes to intelligent humanoids. For some creatures, such as spiders or elementals, we went for volume over detail. For example, we thought people would be happier with three versions of the four classic elementals (air, earth, water, fire) and less story rather than a subset of those four and more background information. Still, even creatures with less text follow this format and the intent behind it.

SKULK

The skulks come at night, prowling the city streets and seeking victims among all strata of society, from the richest merchant to the poorest laborer. Long ago, they were a caste of slaves who toiled for the empire of Bael Turath. When the empire forged its Athanaeum with devil-kind, it left the skulks out of the agreement. The slaves responded with a night of rage that left cities in flames and nobles, merchant princes, and other slave masters dead, their throats slashed while they slept. The demon lord Graz'zt, delighted at the skulks' treachery, granted the few skulks who survived that night the gift of supernatural stealth. To this day, the skulks foreswear the trappings of civilization that once kept them in chains. Like predators in the wild, they slink through alleys and city streets, stalking their prey as they close in for the kill.

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MM: *The first paragraph is a thesis statement. It tells the DM what this entry sets out to do. It should clear the path for everything that follows. The first paragraph has different needs depending on whether the monster is a new critter for 4e or an expansion of an existing creature.*

For new creatures, the intro must engage the DM with a good story hook. What's this monster's story? Why is it important enough to include in this book? This is your chance to convince a DM to use your monster. Craft a good story that illustrates why the monster exists and why it's interesting.

If the monster already exists in 4e, then things are different. The intro should explain what's interesting about these specific critters, but the reader probably already knows the monster's basic story. Instead, focus on what makes these entries interesting, highlighting the story that links them together.

There is also a chance that the entry has disparate creatures which lack a clear theme. For instance, if the entry describes new orcs to fill gaps in existing orc entries, a tight, thematic link between the new orcs might not be necessary. If that's the case, then the intro paragraph can be very brief. The meat of the flavor for such entries lies in the individual entries.

Lore

History DC 16: As Bael Turath crumbled, the skulks danced in their former masters' ruins, yet even the empire's destruction was not enough. The surviving tieflings spread far and wide, and the skulks followed them. Here and there, new tiefling realms took root, but invariably assassinations and murders shattered these nascent societies. When a tiefling champion emerged to reestablish a realm for his or her people, that individual invariably met an untimely and inglorious death in a bed chamber or a back alley. Even today, renowned tieflings, from heroic paladins to devious rogues, disappear more often than other adventurers in the rougher quarters of towns and cities.

In combat, skulks target tieflings in preference over other humanoids. All other things being equal, a skulk would rather sink its blade into the descendants of those who once enslaved and mistreated its ancestors.

MM: *The Lore entry has been transformed into a single block with an associated skill and DC. The skill does not need to be the same skill used to learn about the monster's abilities. It should be whatever skill is most applicable to the information contained here.*

This section guides the DM on how to depict the monster while giving players at least one insight into how these creatures operate. In addition, this is the designer's chance to place the creature into its context in the world—if left alone by adventurers, what do these creatures do?

For existing creatures, this should focus on the specific sub-family the entry builds or, if the creatures fill gaps in existing entries and already have their lore fleshed out elsewhere, create a story element that highlights a useful tactic or trick to play on the monster.

Encounters

The skulks' debt to Graz'zt is encoded in the *Tome of the Blinded Eye*, a manual that established the compact between the demon lord and the skulks. Followers of the Dark Prince demand and receive absolute obedience from skulks. They dispatch skulks to slay and terrorize enemies of Graz'zt. The mysterious death of the demon Kurland, an enemy of Graz'zt that was found decapitated in his palace of molten iron, points to a terrifying prospect: mighty skulk assassins personally serving the Dark Prince.

MM: *An allies section replaces sample encounters. This can be used to forge links between this creature and other monsters it works with. It can list specific creatures, gods, demons, other cults/groups, and so forth. This entry creates a place for the monster alongside the ranks of other monsters we've designed. If the creature isn't operating on its own, who or what does it work with and why? These links create further story details, such as the pledge between the skulks and the demon Graz'zt illustrated here. Essentially, it's used to spin a web that draws in other monsters, NPCs, groups, and so forth. Those associations reveal more about the creature's nature. Our friends reveal a lot about ourselves.*

Skulk Murderer

One murder rarely provokes fear, particularly in a rough town, but the second, third, and fourth cast a chill across the town. Citizens carry daggers with them and look upon strangers with a watchful eye. Nobles remain confined to their homes, leaving only with a couple of bodyguards in tow. Meanwhile, the skulk murderers slip unnoticed through town, seeking their next victim.

MM: *Individual monster entries within the section lead off with the creature's name and a flavor paragraph that depicts the monster in the D&D world. It's a short, descriptive paragraph that highlights one important aspect of the creature. In this example, the paragraph describes the fear and paranoia that skulks breed when they begin hunting in a city. This paragraph should strike a chord*

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with the DM, evoking a mood and highlighting a unique, interesting bit about the creature, viewed through the lens of the D&D world.

This is the hardest paragraph to write but perhaps the most important. When the DM is done reading it, he should have a clear idea of the mood, tone, and purpose of the creature. He should be curious to learn more.

This paragraph can take a number of forms. This one focuses on what happens when skulks run rampant in a city. The nagpa entry highlights that creatures' curse. The jackalwere entry outlines the threat such creatures pose. The gargoyle entry reverses this method, illustrating something about the gargoyle by showing off a different creature's attitude toward it.

Skulk Murderers in Combat

Only death can slake a skulk murderer's hatred of civilization. These fiends eagerly stop to deliver a coup de grace against a fallen foe. Sometimes, the town guard manages to capture or kill a skulk murderer only because the creature was too intent on hacking at a fallen victim.

MM: *The tactics section has transformed into the "... in Combat" section to give writers more flexibility. It can talk about specific tactics, illustrate roleplay hooks, present storytelling methods, and offer other interesting ideas for bringing a monster to life in the campaign. Think of this paragraph as advice on the best way to make the creature an interesting foe. That can be uses of a power combined with specific terrain or tactics, general guidelines on how these guys prefer to fight, or roleplaying advice on battle cries or how to otherwise depict the creature. It should reveal something about the creature's nature and how that nature is reflected in combat. As an example, the skulk entry highlights how these creature go after downed foes to satisfy their bloodlust and ties that into their hatred for civilization and cities. That's a unique tactic which grows out of the skulk's backstory and makes them unique foes.*

Skulk Murderer Medium natural humanoid	**Level 3 Lurker** XP 150
HP 37; **Bloodied** 18	**Initiative** +8
AC 17, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15	**Perception** +3
Speed 6	Low-light vision
Traits	
Peerless Camouflage	
The murderer can make a Stealth check to become hidden when it has cover or concealment instead of needing superior cover or total concealment. The murderer remains hidden after moving if it has cover or concealment after it ends the move.	
Stealthy Step	
The murderer does not take a penalty to Stealth checks for moving more than 2 squares or for running.	
Unseen Strike	
The murderer deals 5 extra damage to any target that couldn't see it at the start of the skulk's turn.	
Standard Actions	
ⓘ **Short Sword** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d6 + 6 damage.	
⚔ **Shuriken Volley** (weapon) ✦ **Encounter**	
Effect: The murderer makes the following attack three times.	
Attack: Ranged 6/12 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d4 + 2 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).	
Skills Bluff +6, Stealth +14, Streetwise +6, Thievery +9	
Str 12 (+2) **Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 15 (+3)	
Con 13 (+2) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 11 (+1)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common	
Equipment leather armor, short sword, 3 shurikens	

About the Author

Mike Mearls is the Group Manager for the Dungeons & Dragons® roleplaying game. His recent credits include *Player's Handbook 3*, *Hammerfast*, and *Monster Manual 3*.

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Dark Sun Part 1

BY RICHARD BAKER AND RODNEY THOMPSON

Welcome to the world of *Dark Sun*! Beneath a crimson sun lie desolate wastelands and cities of cruel splendor where sandaled heroes battle against ancient sorcery and terrible monsters. This is Athas, the world of the *Dark Sun* setting. Rich Baker, lead designer for the new 4th Edition *Dark Sun* setting, and Rodney Thompson, lead developer, introduce you to the process of creating a new D&D game world from the bones of one of TSR's most popular 2nd Edition settings.

Core Concepts of the Setting

Rich: The first step of the design process was to hold a big concept meeting and examine the core concepts of the *Dark Sun* setting. It was a crowded room; we have a lot of *Dark Sun* fans around the office. Anyway, we started throwing questions and statements up on the big white board, trying to get at the key concepts. What is it that makes *Dark Sun* what it is? What *had* to be true in our 4th Edition version to make our new release a *Dark Sun* setting? Many of the answers were obvious: it's a desert world, it's a dangerous setting, psionics are commonplace, there are gladiators and arenas, and so on. Other answers came into focus as we brainstormed. For example, Athas is a world where evil is in charge. Long ago, the evil sorcerer-kings won; they carved up the spoils and settled down to rule over what was left of the world they destroyed.

Rodney: One of the things that really helped us when working on *Eberron* was distilling down the essential parts of the setting into things that could be described in one sentence. These sentences then become guideposts that all of the design looks to in order to determine if something is "Dark Sun" enough for the book. When cooking up the basics of *Dark Sun*, most of those sentences fell into place very quickly. One of the things that most people really latched onto with *Dark Sun* in 2nd Edition was the harshness of the world. In many ways, Athas is an antagonist all its own, and one that lashes out at the heroes every time they move through its wastelands. We knew we needed to keep that, partly because it was memorable but also because it creates an interesting new gameplay dynamic. If overland travel is risky, it keeps characters in one location longer, so "keep the wastelands dangerous" quickly went on the list.

Rich: Some answers that seemed obvious appeared less so when we really looked at them. In 2nd Edition, *Dark Sun* was the world where you played with very high ability scores, broken races, and started at 3rd level. Well, as it turns out, 4th Edition D&D effectively starts you at higher than 1st level because you've got 20 or 30 hit points when you begin, and the ability score bonus scale of 4th Edition lets you get your +2s and +3s without giving you more ability points to spend or better dice to roll. Playing a character more powerful than normal is something people remember about the old *Dark Sun*, but it's not really a core concept of the world.

When we finished, we had a solid list of statements we knew we wanted to be true. Here are seven of them:

Old *Dark Sun* or New *Dark Sun*?

Rich: One of the big questions we hit early on in the process was how *Dark Sun* 2010 should relate to the 2nd Edition product line. Over the course of its five-year run in the '90s, the world of Athas evolved tremendously; Troy Denning's *Prism Pentad* novels revealed great secrets about the origins of the world and brought the rebels of Tyr to a climactic confrontation with the sorcerer-kings and the Dragon itself. Game products expanded the known world to places such as the Last Sea, the Jagged Cliffs, and the Crimson Savannah. Should our new *Dark Sun* books pick up where 2nd Edition left off? Advance the timeline by centuries, as the 3rd Edition *Dragon* Magazine article did? Or return to the world's beginnings, re-envisioning Athas for a new generation of gamers?

Rodney: There was also the question of information overload. Trying to do everything in one or two books would shrink the space we had to cover each topic. The original 1991 boxed set devoted only a paragraph or two to most topics (even the city-states only got a page or two), so we knew it could be done. At the same time, we also knew we were going to want to include lots of new mechanics to make sure the 4th Edition game system could be adapted to a different play style–one that felt like *Dark Sun* but still had the familiar trappings of D&D.

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ATHAS IN SEVEN SENTENCES

The world of the *Dark Sun* setting is unique. This is not a world of shining knights and robed wizards, of deep forests and holy shrines. Athas draws on different traditions of fantasy storytelling; simple survival beneath the crimson sun is often its own adventure. With that in mind, here are the seven most important things you need to know about the *Dark Sun* setting:

The world is a desert. Athas is a hot, arid world covered with vast stretches of desert—endless seas of dunes, stony wastes, thorny scrublands, and worse. In this forbidding world, cities and villages can only exist in a few oases or verdant plains. Beyond these islands of civilization is a barren wasteland roamed by nomads, raiders, and hungry monsters.

The world is savage. Life is brutal and short in Athas. The vile institution of slavery is widespread in Athas, and hundreds, perhaps thousands, are sent to their deaths every year in bloody arena spectacles. Metal is quite scarce. Arms and armor are often made of bone, stone, wood, and other such materials, because steel is priceless.

Arcane magic defiles the world. Athas was reduced to a wasteland by the reckless use of arcane magic in ancient wars. To cast an arcane spell, one must gather power from the living world around. Plants wither to black ash, crippling pain wracks animals and people, and the soil itself is sterilized; nothing can grow in that spot again.

Terrible sorcerer-kings rule the cities. The city-states of Athas are ruled by defilers of immense power. These mighty spellcasters have held their thrones for centuries. The sorcerer-kings govern through templars, a class of officials and lesser defilers who can call upon the kings' powers.

The gods of Athas are silent. Athas is a world without gods. There are no clerics, no paladins, no prophets or religious orders. In the absence of divine influence, people have turned to other sources of power. Psionic power is well known and widely practiced in Athas, while shamans and druids call upon the primal powers of the world—even though the primal spirits of Athas are often wild and vengeful.

Fierce and deadly monsters populate the world. Athas is home to its own deadly ecology. Cattle, horses, camels—none of these animals can be found in Athas. Instead, people tend flocks of erdlus, ride on kanks or crodlus, and draw wagons with inixes and mekillots. Wild creatures such as lions, bears, or wolves are almost nonexistent. In their place are terrors such as the id beast, the so-ut, or the tembo.

Familiar races aren't what you expect. Many of the fantasy stereotypes don't apply to Athasian heroes. On Athas, elves are a nomadic race of herders, raiders, peddlers, and thieves. Halflings aren't amiable river-folk; they're xenophobic headhunters and cannibals who hunt and kill anyone foolish enough to venture into their montane forests. Each of the major races has adapted to Athas in new and unexpected ways.

Rich: We kicked around the options available to us off and on through several design meetings, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of each one. A clear consensus soon emerged: We all felt that the best, purest, most captivating moment of *Dark Sun*'s previous run was the moment in time presented in the original 1991 boxed set. The 1996 set that captured the events and developments of the *Prism Pentad*—half the sorcerer-kings dead, rain falling in the Sea of Silt—felt like it had wandered into a place where it wasn't quite *Dark Sun* anymore. So we settled on the idea of producing an "ultimate" *Dark Sun*, returning to that golden moment of the original set. The events of the *Prism Pentad* may unfold in your new *Dark Sun* campaign more or less as they did in the novels, or they might not. This is a world where the exploits of Rikus, Neeva, Sadira, and the rest are only one possibility among many.

Rodney: While the things that followed the original *Dark Sun* boxed set had many interesting ideas, I think most Dark Sun fans can agree that there was a certain magic to that first set that really captures the imagination. It wasn't just that it was different, it was also that the world had a really great foundation for some compelling stories. One of the big philosophies that we try and embrace with D&D is that it's the players that should be the heroes of those stories, so we try to avoid metaplots too much. The *Prism Pentad* and follow-up material explore one way those stories could unfold, but those of us that used to play *Dark Sun* all had our own stories of the way things played out, with ourselves as the heroes. We wanted people approaching the 4th Edition *Dark Sun* books to get the same sense of magic that we all got when opening that 1991 boxed set, and then to go on to tell stories with themselves as the stars.

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That all said, there are plenty of neat things from those later products that were just too interesting to pass up. I'm looking at you, Dregoth. So, we did some cherry-picking of things to add to our version of the setting.

Bringing Athas into 4th Edition

Rich: More so than most D&D campaign worlds, *Dark Sun* was distinguished by its unique set of races, classes, and monsters. Everybody remembers Athas as the world where you got to play muls, thri-kreen, dune-running elves, gladiators, templars, and bards with poison. All of these things needed to be part of the 4th Edition *Dark Sun* setting, or it wouldn't be *Dark Sun*. At the same time, *Dark Sun* also suffered from *too much* uniqueness. For many characters, you literally didn't need the *Player's Handbook* and couldn't make use of core D&D sourcebooks, articles, or references. The various "Complete" books were full of character kits that didn't fit in Athas, and the DM had a hard time finding adventures that suited the setting. Given those challenges, we wanted to make sure that the new *Dark Sun* set featured its iconic character types while "playing nicer" with the rest of the 4th Edition D&D library.

Rodney: In 2nd Edition, *Dark Sun* did a lot of "forbidding" of content. There was a lot of, "No, you can't use this" scattered throughout those books. We knew pretty early on that we wanted a bit more of a lenient approach. Rather than forbidding the use of something, we could speak in generalities or just not talk about something to accomplish the same effect. Rather than doing a line-by-line list of everything that has been published for 4th Edition that can or can't be used in *Dark Sun* (a list that would become obsolete the month after the *Dark Sun* books were released), we figured that we could use the same guideposts that we used for the designers as guideposts for the Dungeon Master and players. Dungeon Masters are the managers of their own campaigns, and we didn't see any need to provide restrictions when DMs are perfectly capable of determining what fits within their idea of what *Dark Sun* should be. Certainly we knew that we wanted to provide guidelines to help the DM grasp what the setting is supposed to be like, but you never can tell for certain which situations will arise in individual campaigns. Even though something may seem out of place at first glance, individual DMs might find that in their campaigns, allowing that particular ritual or magic item is the right choice.

Rich: A good example of the sort of challenge we faced was the inclusion of races in the 4th Edition *Player's Handbook* that hadn't existed back in 1991: dragonborn, eladrins, and tieflings. While it would have been easy to say "these races just don't exist in Athas, roll up something else," we didn't want to use this sort of brute-force approach. For every veteran *Dark Sun* player who isn't expecting to see a dragonborn in the new setting, there's a player who started playing D&D with 4th Edition and wouldn't understand why his or her favorite character race isn't allowed in Athas. After some soul-searching, we decided that many of the things found in the 4th Edition *Player's Handbook* needed to appear in the world of Athas, and we turned our attention to making sure that we crafted the most interesting, logical, and honest-to-the-world stories for these races that we could come up with. For example, the old *Dark Sun* had a race of dragon-people in the dray of Giustenal; we married the dragonborn to that story.

Rodney: I think that's a good example of what I like to call "putting things through the *Dark Sun* filter." One thing I wanted to make sure of was that we didn't just drop things into the setting for the sake of adding them. They need to have that unique twist, that altered story, that makes them fit into the world of Athas as a natural thing. Luckily, the dray already provided a good venue for dragonborn, so we didn't need to shoehorn anything in—they were already there. Though you'll see more of the other races in coming months, I'll just say this: the eladrin in *Dark Sun* aren't your erudite masters of arcane magic that retreat into palatial estates in another realm. Nothing comes through into *Dark Sun* without being twisted by the setting's premises.

About the Authors

Richard Baker is an award-winning game designer who has written numerous D&D adventures and sourcebooks, including the *Manual of the Planes*, *Draconomicon 2*, and the *Dark Sun Campaign Guide*. He's also a New York Times bestselling author best-selling author of Forgotten Realms novels such as *Condemnation*, the *Last Mythal* trilogy, and the *Blades of the Moonsea* series.

Rodney Thompson is an RPG designer at Wizards of the Coast. Originally from Chattanooga, TN, his credits for Dungeons & Dragons include *Monster Manual 3*, the *Dark Sun Campaign Setting*, *Player Essentials: Heroes of the Fallen Lands*, *Player Essentials: Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*, and *Monster Vault*.

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Orcus

He is a grossly fat demon lord, some 15 feet tall. His huge gray body is covered with goatish hair, and his head is goat-like although his horns are similar to those of a ram. His great legs are also goat-like, but his arms are human. Vast bat wings sprout from his back, and his long, snaky tail is tipped with a poisonous head.

Orcus: This is your life!

Other major demons have had their moment of fame. Lolth landed the cover of *Monster Manual* 3. Demogorgon showed up on *Monster Manual* 2. But this is Orcus, Prince of the Undead, who was featured on the *Monster Manual* itself; he is an important enough figure that 4th Edition D&D even went by the internal codename "Orcus" before its announcement. He deserves no less a representation than his gargantuan figure—an impressive "mini" if that term possibly applies to a demon lord of his majesty.

If you don't know the history of Orcus—and why he has made such an impression in the game that his mini simply had to come out—you can read this review of his career in D&D.

Mythological Origins

Truth be told, Orcus might not be the single most powerful creature in the game. He's certainly contested the spotlight with the likes of Demogorgon, Graz'zt, and most recently the Raven Queen. That said, Orcus and his death-dealing wand go back to the earliest days of the game—back to when its creators amalgamated various world myths, legends, and even religious demons into the game's collection of monsters.

That's where Orcus comes in.

We mentioned a bit of this in Demogorgon's retrospective. The history of Orcus's name alone is a quick but worthwhile read, with origins as an ancient underworld god who might have evolved into a Middle Ages wild man (a hair-covered brute armed with a club). They're next to each other in the *Monster Manual* for a reason; even the lowliest pig-tusked orc shares an etymological connection with this demon lord, as "Orcus" transitioned into the word for ogre as well as for orc (picked up by none other than Tolkien).

Entrance to the Game

The immense and unending enmity between Orcus and Demogorgon no doubt stems from their appearance as the game's first demon lords in *Supplement III: Eldritch Wizardry*. Years later, the two of them also made a joint appearance in the **D&D Immortal Set**, albeit in oddly nicknamed, altered forms. This "Immortal" Orcus (also known as "The Goat, Master of the Dead, Lord of Darkness, The Black Prince"), when willing to fight personally (a rare event), "...uses any convenient weapons, wielding one in each hand, and swings his deadly poisonous barbed tail as well."

Any convenient weapon? Not likely. True, "Immortal" Orcus still padded about on cloven, goatlike feet, and his ram horns were very much present. The thing to note here is the absence of his signature weapon: the *Wand of Orcus*.

The Wand of Orcus: 1st Edition

With the 1st Edition *Monster Manual* (as well as publication of the *Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth*), Orcus had to share the stage with several other demon lords and princes: Juiblex, Graz'zt, Fraz-Urb-Iuu, Kostchtchie.... Nevertheless, his *Monster Manual* description stated that "...it is probable that this creature is one of the most powerful and strongest of all demons. If he so much as slaps with his open hand, the blow causes 1-4 hit points of damage."

Also present: his wand. Orcus's famed wand of death is a rod of obsidian (sometimes cold iron and obsidian set with rubies) topped by a skull. "This instrument causes death (or annihilation) to any

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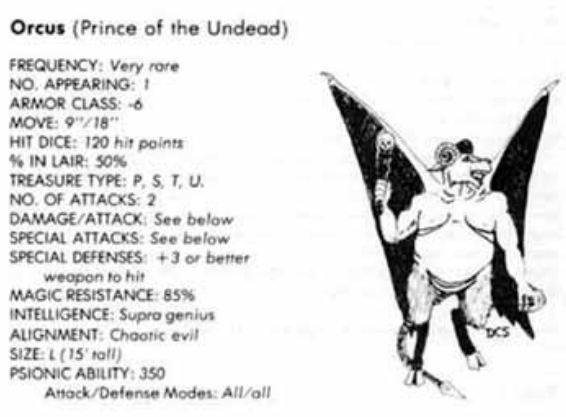
creature, save those of like status (other princes or devils, saints, godlings, etc.) merely by touching their flesh." Listed as an artifact in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, the wand could be chanced upon by players. After all, at times Orcus even allowed his wand to "...pass into the Prime Material Plane in order to wreak chaos and evil upon all living things there." However "...this sort of dalliance lasts only for a short time—perhaps a year or two at the most—before the bloated prince grows bored and reclaims his artifact, usually along with the soul of whoever currently wields it."

Later versions would add how the wand's skull was either of a human hero or else a god who once challenged Orcus to a duel; and that the wand itself functioned as a +6 *unholy chaotic heavy mace* (if brought down upon your head). More recently, it's listed as a +6 *lifedrinker heavy mace*—and although the original artifact did not provide its full death-dealing power to users other than Orcus, this version does; if a hero somehow takes possession of his wand in *E3 Prince of Undeath*, its *touch of death* functions as designed.

(In its current inception, the wand is just as potent as it was in the past. As we put to the test, the *Wand of Orcus* could defeat Demogorgon—in one fell blow!)

Lolth, we recently noted, served as the ultimate villain in *Q1*, the culmination of the epic adventure series that began at the *Temple of Elemental Evil* and ended in the *Demonweb Pits*. Orcus had his own adventures: 1st Edition's *H*-series (concerning the *BattleSystem* rules, for mass battles/minis play). These were, as might be guessed, high-level fare. *H2: The Mines of Bloodstone* included, among its many encounters, an arsenal guarded by a mimic door *and* three lurkers above dropping over any poor thief attempting to pick the lock; an arena stocked


Orcus (Prince of the Undead)

FREQUENCY: *Very rare*
NO. APPEARING: *1*
ARMOR CLASS: *-6*
MOVE: *9"/18"*
HIT DICE: *120 hit points*
% IN LAIR: *50%*
TREASURE TYPE: *P, S, T, U.*
NO. OF ATTACKS: *2*
DAMAGE/ATTACK: *See below*
SPECIAL ATTACKS: *See below*
SPECIAL DEFENSES: *+3 or better weapon to hit*
MAGIC RESISTANCE: *85%*
INTELLIGENCE: *Supra genius*
ALIGNMENT: *Chaotic evil*
SIZE: *L (15' tall)*
PSIONIC ABILITY: *350*
Attack/Defense Modes: *All/all*

with a captured catoblepas, an old red dragon, and a beholder; eight "test" chambers, one of which contained a tarrasque; and finally, in case the party failed in their quest and he happens to appear, Orcus. And that's just *H2*. Out of *H1-4*. Oddly, although Orcus still wielded his wand in this adventure, he also carried a two-handed +4 *defender sword*. Just in case.

PRINCE OF THE UNDEAD: 3RD EDITION

Orcus's role as a demon lord has always been fixed: ruler of the undead. His very description reminds lesser beings of this influence: "Dead creatures respond to the presence of Orcus, even without his command. Skeletal arms claw up from the ground where he walks and grab at the feet of his foes. Spirits fill the air with a ghostly chorus of piteous moans, tugging at his foes and hindering their movement." Yet although he rules the undead, commanding a host of them as well as armies of demons, it's likewise said that he also "...despises undead. He has little but contempt for them and uses them without thought or consideration. Of course, Orcus despises the living as well."

Earlier versions specified Orcus's abilities to *speak with the dead*, *animate dead*, and of course *summon undead* (from skeletons and zombies—a theme we've recently seen in the *Chaos Scar*—to vampires). Even now, getting squashed by this demon prince isn't the end of the matter; with Orcus's *master of undeath* power, any creature slain by his wand rises as one his legion dread wraiths.

In 3rd Edition's *Book of Vile Darkness*, Orcus once even rose as an undead, having been slaughtered somewhere during the 2nd Edition Blood War (a topic we'll leave well alone for now), supposedly by a drow working for Lolth. He must have grown severely complacent, but these things do happen. Of course, you can't keep a good demon down, and Orcus rose to power again, retaking his fortress-city on the abyssal plane of Thanatos.

Don't Judge Me...
It's to Scale.
None of my players appreciate my budget-saving measures, particularly now that Orcus has a miniature.

WIZARDS of the COAST
NO one can rightly say what caused Wizards of the Coast to re-evaluate the market viability of an Orcus miniature.

A GOD AMONG DEMONS: 4TH EDITION

A power-hungry demon lord with a command of the undead, Orcus has risen—*almost*—to the level of deity. Lolth, Asmodeus, Tiamat, even the lich Vecna have ascended and boast their own religion. Orcus has been "...worshipped as a god more often than most of the other demon princes are. Although Demogorgon may actually be more powerful, Orcus may be closer to ascending to true godhood." Certainly, he does have his share of loyal followers, death cultists, and even dark temples, with Quah-Nomag the Skull King and Doresain the Ghoul King both mentioned foremost among his servitors.

Although Orcus's rivalries with Demogorgon and Graz'zt have moved to the background in recent years, a new opponent has emerged in his way: the Raven Queen. As the god of death and fate, she controls the spirits of the dead and their passage to the afterlife—an authority that Orcus would rather claim for himself...

And now we come back to that mini of Orcus. If you've been running the *E*-series of adventures, you'll know it culminates in a showdown between the Raven Queen and Orcus—with the players in the pivotal role to determine the final course of the battle. If the party makes it that far, you now have a suitably impressive mini to place on the table...you know, instead of propping your copy of the *Monster Manual* to stand in for Orcus.

Summer News

BY CHRIS TULACH

This summer, we have a lot of activities on our plate here, and in addition to the standard flurry of conventions, we have some other great news to share. Let's dive right in!

Convention Support Update

We often get requests from convention organizers for support for their shows, so we've revamped our Convention Support Program. You can learn all about it here. In order to take advantage of receiving materials for your show, you'll want to pair up with a local Wizards Play Network Core-level store. The kits are a great deal, and if you're set up to work with your local store, they can order them for you.

In addition, we have just added a new content feature for convention organizers! We get frequent requests from convention organizers to run great D&D content that we create specially for the big shows that Wizards attends, such as **Gen Con Indy** or **PAX.** These special adventures and play experiences are now available for order through the normal scheduling system, accessible through the organizer's Personal Information Center. Simply log into your account, select "Event Sanctioning," select "D&D Wizards Play Network," and find the adventure title called "D&D Convention Specials." The description of this title will mention what's currently available in the downloadable file. Once you've scheduled it for your show, you can access the .zip file through the event details.

Inside the D&D Convention Specials file, you'll find currently available special content for shows—stuff like the D&D Convention Delve and special one-off adventure experiences. As new special adventure content becomes available, the file will be updated and old content will be rotated out. To start off, we have *Ruins of the Spectral Glade* (a Delve event that ran early this year) and *Ringing in the Deep* (a special one-off adventure premiering at **Origins** letting players take on the role of monsters). You can report adventure play for these games through Wizards Event Reporter (recommended) or the online reporting tool. Once new content is available, the .zip file will cycle those adventures in and sometimes other content will be cycled out. Whenever you organize a show, be sure to order the D&D Convention Specials event from the system and check out what cool content you can offer!

Living Forgotten Realms Community Enhancements

The *Living Forgotten Realms* campaign is undergoing some exciting changes. The campaign administrative staff is taking a direct role in managing the campaign, with Wizards still facilitating the campaign's structure by moving all business to its Wizards Community Group site. Now more than ever, the community will help determine the direction of the campaign. The campaign's adventure structure will also change based on player feedback to provide a more story-focused play experience.

You can read up on all the coming changes by heading to the LFR Group site and reading the blog post entitled "A New Direction for LFR." You can ask questions about the new enhancements to the campaign and join in on the discussion by heading to the Forums located on the group's page.

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Gen Con Indy is Approaching!

On August 5-8, we once again descend upon Indianapolis for another long weekend of full-on gaming madness at Gen Con Indy. This year, we're offering a huge variety of events, spotlighting the new Dark Sun™ Campaign Setting, the upcoming releases of the **D&D** *Fantasy Roleplaying Game* (AKA the "Red Box") and the *Castle Ravenloft*™ Board Game, among other things. In addition, the D&D Championship returns this year with a two-round spectacular called *A Hole in the World*. Here are some details on just a few of the exciting events going on; more information will come through the D&D website in July! For more information right now, check out the official Gen Con Indy website. Tickets will be available onsite for many of these events, and you can always head into the Sagamore Ballroom with a fistful of generics to see what you can find.

Embrace Your Edition!

This year, we've invited many independent D&D DMs running games of any D&D variety to come up to the Sagamore Ballroom and host their tables alongside ours! Whether it's 1st Edition, 2nd Edition, 3rd or 3.5 Edition, or the original game, all fans of D&D have a place in the Sagamore Ballroom. If you have a hankering for an old-school game, the Sagamore is now *the* destination for all things D&D!

D&D Convention Delve: *Lair of the Dread Witch*

In the deep forest lies a place of dark power. Its corruptive influence seeps into the lands beyond its borders. Can you contain the threat of the dread witch and stop her rituals before all falls into darkness? A 1st-level D&D convention delve, where you can play as often as you like, earning tokens that can be redeemed for prizes!

D&D Classics: *Curse of the Gray Hag*

The mists roll in at the village of Nightshade Hollows, where fearful residents are falling prey to a wicked denizen with a terrible secret. Can you unravel the mystery of the town's curse before you succumb to it as well? A heroic-tier D&D adventure with characters provided.

D&D Dark Sun Arenas: *Glory and Blood*

Seven city-states . . . seven gladiatorial arenas . . . one chance at lasting glory. The crowds of Athas await as you compete for their favor and the title of Arena Master! Create your own 1st-level Dark Sun character onsite to earn glory, upgrade your equipment, and master the different arenas in the circuit. Play as often as you like. Each arena fight you win brings you closer to the ultimate prize!

D&D Open Championship: *A Hole in the World*

Five heroes on their final, epic journey must band together to save their world from the ravages of the Abyss. But stopping the world from the Abyssal assault isn't enough; they must face down the demon lord responsible once and for all to end the threat! This D&D Open Championship is a qualifying round consisting of five encounters that must be passed in order to enter the final round. Epic-tier characters are provided. Form your team (five plus alternate) and prepare to prove your group can make it to the final round and be crowned D&D Champions!

Castle Ravenloft Board Game Challenge

Explore the secrets of the new *Castle Ravenloft* Board Game as you play through one of the many adventures included. The mists of Ravenloft await, and perhaps, with a little luck and some teamwork, you can emerge from Strahd's castle with your wits and your lives!

Living Forgotten Realms: Return to Ravens Bluff!

A series of three linked adventures forms a complete mini-campaign suitable for 1st-level characters! If you're a fan of the Living City, you'll want to give the mini-campaign a try, and if you've never played *Living Forgotten Realms* before, this is a great place to start!

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3 Game Days in 3 Months

Oh yes, it's true. Starting in August, we have three D&D Game Days coming at you! Dark Sun Game Day leads the charge on August 21, followed by D&D Red Box Game Day on September 11. Then, for something completely different, try Gamma World Game Day on October 23! Make sure your local Wizards Play Network store is participating by finding them on the Event Locator and giving them a nudge. If you're a store organizer, scheduling for Dark Sun Game Day is open now but closes soon—don't wait until the last day, July 5! Red Box Game Day scheduling opens on July 6, and Gamma World Game Day scheduling opens on August 9. Want more info? The adventure descriptions are below. As we get closer to the dates, keep an eye on the Events page!

Dark Sun Game Day: *The Lost Cistern of Aravek*

A remarkable device has been discovered in the wastes near the city-state of Tyr – a magical cistern created by a long-dead preserver named Aravek. You are charged to journey through the harsh desert lands, brave fierce monsters, and retrieve the cistern before your enemies can claim it for their own cruel master. Can you bring a font of live-giving water to a parched populace? Or will you succumb to dangers beyond the gates of Tyr? A Dark Sun Game Day adventure for 4-6 pregenerated 4th-level characters.

Red Box Game Day: *Sunderpeak Temple*

Long a bastion of good on the edges of the wilderness, Sunderpeak Temple has succumbed to an unknown threat. You have been tasked to journey to the site of the temple and find out what has befallen its residents, as the priests are needed to destroy an enchanted skill imbued with necromantic magic. Will you face down the dark denizens that dwell within and learn the truth of the temple's fate? Journey back to the realm of nostalgia as we celebrate the release of the Red Box! A Dungeons & Dragons Game Day adventure designed for 4-6 pregenerated characters of 2nd level.

Gamma World Game Day: *Trouble in Freesboro*

It's shocking how the Big Mistake completely obliterated some places while others got by relatively unscathed. Freesboro falls into the latter camp, but if Genghis Tangh has his way, life will never be the same for the mutants of Gamma Terra. Delve into the origins of the Big Mistake as you take on Tangh and his forces! Pick up a D&D Gamma World Boxed Set, a few booster packs of power cards, and create your own characters in an exciting new Game Day experience! A D&D Gamma World Game Day adventure designed for 4-6 characters of 1st level.

That's all for this month! Next month, we'll talk about the upcoming D&D Encounters season premiering on September 22 and keep you up-to-date on the latest and greatest D&D program offerings!

About the Author

Originally thought to have been raised from a humble Midwestern family, Chris Tulach actually fell to Earth in a meteorite-shaped capsule flung from a planet far outside our galaxy. While under the yellow rays of Sol, Chris's nerdity far surpasses that of any normal human. Using this precious gift only for good, he has become the D&D Organized Play Content Developer, responsible for the development and deployment of Dungeons & Dragons organized play programs. He is also the co-author of E2, *Kingdom of the Ghouls*.

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